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*The Works of Stendhal*

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# THE CHARTERHOUSE OF PARMA

VOLUME TWO

MARIE-HENRI BEYLE
[DE STENDHAL]

# THE CHARTERHOUSE OF PARMA

*Translated from the French by*
C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF

VOLUME TWO

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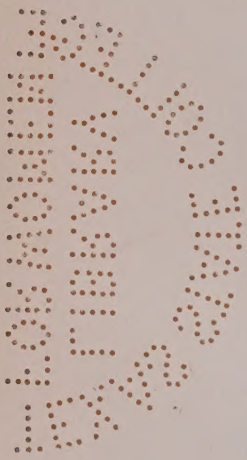

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·I·

# THE CHARTERHOUSE OF PARMA

VOLUME TWO

# THE CHARTERHOUSE OF PARMA

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHILE Fabrizio was in pursuit of love, in a village near Parma, the Fiscal General Rassi, who did not know that he was so near, continued to treat his case as though he had been a Liberal: he pretended to be unable to find—or, rather, he intimidated—the witnesses for the defence; and finally, after the most ingenious operations, carried on for nearly a year, and about two months after Fabrizio's final return to Bologna, on a certain Friday, the Marchesa Raversi, mad with joy, announced publicly in her drawing-room that next day the sentence which had just been pronounced, in the last hour, on young del Dongo would be presented to the Prince for his signature and approved by him. A few minutes later the Duchessa was informed of this utterance by her enemy.

"The Conte must be extremely ill served by his agents!" she said to herself; "only this morning he thought that the sentence could not be passed for another week. Perhaps he would not be sorry to see my young Grand Vicar kept out of Parma; but," she added, breaking into song, "we shall see him come again; and one day he will be our Archbishop." The Duchessa rang:

"Collect all the servants in the waiting-room," she told

her footman, "including the kitchen staff; go to the town commandant and get the necessary permit to procure four post horses, and have those horses harnessed to my landau within half an hour." All the women of the household were set to work packing trunks: the Duchessa hastily chose a travelling dress, all without sending any word to the Conte; the idea of playing a little joke on him sent her into a transport of joy.

"My friends," she said to the assembled servants, "I learn that my poor nephew is to be condemned in his absence for having had the audacity to defend his life against a raging madman; I mean Giletti, who was trying to kill him. You have all of you had opportunities of seeing how mild and inoffensive Fabrizio's nature is. Rightly indignant at this atrocious outrage, I am going to Florence; I leave for each of you ten years' wages; if you are in distress, write to me, and, so long as I have a sequin, there will be something for you."

The Duchessa meant exactly what she said, and, at her closing words, the servants dissolved in tears; her eyes too were moist: she added in a voice faint with emotion: "Pray to God for me and for Monsignor Fabrizio del Dongo, First Grand Vicar of the Diocese, who to-morrow morning is going to be condemned to the galleys, or, which would be less stupid, to the penalty of death."

The tears of the servants flowed in double volume, and gradually changed into cries that were almost seditious; the Duchessa stepped into her carriage and drove to the Prince's Palace. Despite the unusual hour, she sent in a request for an audience by General Fontana, the Aide-de-Camp in waiting; she was by no means in court dress, a fact which threw this Aide-de-Camp into a profound stupor. As for the Prince, he was not at all surprised, still less annoyed by this request for an audience. "We shall see tears flowing from fine eyes," he said to him-

self, rubbing his hands. "She comes to sue for pardon; at last that proud beauty is going to humble herself! She was, really, too insupportable with her little airs of independence! Those speaking eyes seemed always to be saying to me, when the slightest thing offended her: 'Naples or Milan would have very different attractions as a residence from your little town of Parma.' In truth, I do not reign over Naples, nor over Milan; but now at last this great lady is coming to ask me for something which depends upon me alone, and which she is burning to obtain; I always thought that nephew's coming here would bring me some advantage."

While the Prince was smiling at these thoughts, and giving himself up to all these agreeable anticipations, he walked up and down his cabinet, at the door of which General Fontana remained standing stiff and erect like a soldier presenting arms. Seeing the sparkling eyes of the Prince, and remembering the Duchessa's travelling dress, he imagined a dissolution of the Monarchy. His bewilderment knew no bounds when he heard the Prince say: "Ask the Signora Duchessa to wait for a quarter of an hour." The General Aide-de-Camp made his half-turn, like a soldier on parade; the Prince was still smiling: "Fontana is not accustomed," he said to himself, "to see that proud Duchessa kept waiting. The face of astonishment with which he is going to tell her about the *quarter of an hour to wait* will pave the way for the touching tears which this cabinet is going to see her shed." This quarter of an hour was exquisite for the Prince; he walked up and down with a firm and steady pace; he *reigned*. "It will not do at this point to say anything that is not perfectly correct; whatever my feelings for the Duchessa may be, I must never forget that she is one of the greatest ladies of my court. How used Louis XIV to speak to the Princesses his daughters, when he had occasion to be displeased with

them?" And his eyes came to rest on the portrait of the Great King.

The amusing thing was that the Prince never thought of asking himself whether he should shew clemency to Fabrizio, or what form that clemency should take. Finally, at the end of twenty minutes, the faithful Fontana presented himself again at the door, but without saying a word. "The Duchessa Sanseverina may enter," cried the Prince, with a theatrical air. "Now for the tears," he added inwardly, and, as though to prepare himself for such a spectacle, took out his handkerchief.

Never had the Duchessa been so gay or so pretty; she did not seem five-and-twenty. Seeing her light and rapid little step scarcely brush the carpet, the poor Aide-de-Camp was on the point of losing his reason altogether.

"I have a thousand pardons to ask of Your Serene Highness," said the Duchessa in her light and gay little voice; "I have taken the liberty of presenting myself before him in a costume which is not exactly conventional, but Your Highness has so accustomed me to his kindnesses that I have ventured to hope that he will be pleased to accord me this pardon also."

The Duchessa spoke quite slowly so as to give herself time to enjoy the spectacle of the Prince's face; it was delicious, by reason of the profound astonishment and of the traces of the grand manner which the position of his head and arms still betrayed. The Prince sat as though struck by a thunderbolt; in a shrill and troubled little voice he exclaimed from time to time, barely articulating the words: *"What's that! What's that!"* The Duchessa, as though out of respect, having ended her compliment, left him ample time to reply; then went on:

"I venture to hope that Your Serene Highness deigns to pardon me the incongruity of my costume"; but, as she said the words, her mocking eyes shone with so bright a

sparkle that the Prince could not endure it; he studied the ceiling, an act which with him was the final sign of the most extreme embarrassment.

*"What's that! What's that!"* he said again; then he had the good fortune to hit upon a phrase:—"Signora Duchessa, pray be seated"; he himself drew forward a chair for her, not ungraciously. The Duchessa was by no means insensible to this courtesy, she moderated the petulance of her gaze.

*"What's that! What's that!"* the Prince once more repeated, moving uneasily in his chair, in which one would have said that he could find no solid support.

"I am going to take advantage of the cool night air to travel by post," went on the Duchessa, "and as my absence may be of some duration, I have not wished to leave the States of His Serene Highness without thanking him for all the kindnesses which, in the last five years, he has deigned to shew me." At these words the Prince at last understood; he grew pale; he was the one man in the world who really suffered when he saw himself proved wrong in his calculations. Then he assumed an air of grandeur quite worthy of the portrait of Louis XIV which hung before his eyes. "Very good," thought the Duchessa, "there is a man."

"And what is the reason for this sudden departure?" said the Prince in a fairly firm tone.

"I have long had the plan in my mind," replied the Duchessa, "and a little insult which has been offered to *Monsignor* Del Dongo, whom to-morrow they are going to sentence to death or to the galleys, makes me hasten my departure."

"And to what town are you going?"

"To Naples, I think." She added as she rose to her feet: "It only remains for me to take leave of Your Serene Highness and to thank him most humbly for his *former*

kindnesses." She, in turn, spoke with so firm an air that the Prince saw that in two minutes all would be over; once the sensation of her departure had occurred, he knew that no further arrangement was possible; she was not a woman to retrace her steps. He ran after her.

"But you know well, Signora Duchessa," he said, taking her hand, "that I have always felt a regard for you, a regard to which it rested only with you to give another name. A murder has been committed; that is a fact which no one can deny; I have entrusted the sifting of the evidence to my best judges. . . ."

At these words the Duchessa rose to her full height; every sign of respect and even of urbanity disappeared in the twinkling of an eye; the outraged woman became clearly apparent, and the outraged woman addressing a creature whom she knew to have broken faith with her. It was with an expression of the most violent anger, and indeed of contempt that she said to the Prince, dwelling on every word:

"I am leaving the States of Your Serene Highness for ever, so as never to hear the names of the Fiscal Rassi and of the other infamous assassins who have condemned my nephew and so many others to death; if Your Serene Highness does not wish to introduce a feeling of bitterness into the last moments that I shall pass in the presence of a Prince who is courteous and intelligent when he is not led astray, I beg him most humbly not to recall to me the thought of those infamous judges who sell themselves for a thousand scudi or a Cross."

The admirable—and, above all, genuine—accent in which these words were uttered made the Prince shudder; he feared for a moment to see his dignity compromised by an accusation even more direct, but on the whole his sensation soon became one of pleasure; he admired the Duchessa; her face and figure attained at that moment to a sublime

beauty. "Great God! How beautiful she is!" the Prince said to himself; "one ought to make some concessions to a woman who is so unique, when there probably is not another like her in the whole of Italy. Oh well, with a little policy it might not be impossible one day to make her my mistress: there is a wide gulf between a creature like this and that doll of a Marchesa Balbi, who moreover robs my poor subjects of at least three hundred thousand francs every year. . . . But did I hear aright?" he thought suddenly; "she said: 'Condemned my nephew and so many others.'" Then his anger boiled over, and it was with a stiffness worthy of his supreme rank that the Prince said, after an interval of silence: "And what would one have to do to make the Signora not leave us?"

"Something of which you are not capable," replied the Duchessa in an accent of the most bitter irony and the most unconcealed contempt.

The Prince was beside himself, but his professional training as an Absolute Sovereign gave him the strength to overcome his first impulse. "I must have this woman," he said to himself; "so much I owe to myself, then she must be made to die of shame. . . . If she leaves this cabinet, I shall never see her again." But, mad with rage and hatred as he was at this moment, where was he to find an answer that would at once satisfy the requirements of what he owed to himself and induce the Duchessa not to abandon his court immediately? "She cannot," he said to himself, "repeat or turn to ridicule a gesture," and he placed himself between the Duchessa and the door of his cabinet. Presently he heard a tap at this door.

"Who is the creature," he cried, shouting with the full force of his lungs, "who is the creature who comes here to thrust his fatuous presence upon me?" Poor General Fontana shewed a pallid face of complete discomfiture, and it was with the air of a man in his last agony that he stam-

mered these inarticulate words: "His Excellency the Conte Mosca solicits the honour of being introduced."

"Let him come in," said, or rather shouted the Prince, and, as Mosca bowed:

"Well," he said to him, "here is the Signora Duchessa Sanseverina, who informs me that she is leaving Parma immediately to go and settle at Naples, and who, incidentally, is being most impertinent to me."

"What!" said Mosca turning pale.

"Oh! So you did not know of this plan of departure?"

"Not a word; I left the Signora at six o'clock, happy and content."

This statement had an incredible effect on the Prince. First of all he looked at Mosca; his increasing pallor shewed the Prince that he was telling the truth and was in no way an accomplice of the Duchessa's desperate action. "In that case," he said to himself, "I lose her for ever; pleasure and vengeance, all goes in a flash. At Naples she will make epigrams with her nephew Fabrizio about the great fury of the little Prince of Parma." He looked at the Duchessa: the most violent scorn and anger were disputing the possession of her heart; her eyes were fixed at that moment on Conte Mosca, and the exquisite curves of that lovely mouth expressed the bitterest disdain. The whole face seemed to be saying: "Vile courtier!" "So," thought the Prince after he had examined her, "I lose this means of bringing her back to my country. At this moment again, if she leaves this cabinet, she is lost to me; God knows the things she will say about my judges at Naples. . . . And with that spirit, and that divine power of persuasion which heaven has bestowed on her, she will make everyone believe her. I shall be obliged to her for the reputation of a ridiculous tyrant, who gets up in the middle of the night to look under his bed. . . ." Then, by an adroit move and as though he were intending to walk up and down the

room to reduce his agitation, the Prince took his stand once again in front of the door of the cabinet; the Conte was on his right, at a distance of three paces, pale, shattered, and trembling so that he was obliged to seek support from the back of the armchair in which the Duchessa had been sitting during the earlier part of the audience, and which the Prince in a moment of anger had pushed across the floor. The Conte was in love. "If the Duchessa goes, I follow her," he said to himself; "but will she want me in her train? That is the question."

On the Prince's left, the Duchessa, erect, her arms folded and pressed to her bosom, was looking at him with an admirable impatience: a complete and intense pallor had taken the place of the vivid colours which a moment earlier animated that sublime face.

The Prince, in contrast to the other two occupants of the room, had a red face and a troubled air; his left hand played convulsively with the Cross attached to the Grand Cordon of his Order which he wore under his coat: with his right hand he caressed his chin.

"What is to be done?" he asked the Conte, without knowing quite what he himself was doing, and carried away by the habit of consulting this other in everything.

"I can think of nothing, truly, Serene Highness," replied the Conte with the air of a man yielding up his last breath. It was all he could do to pronounce the words of his answer. The tone of his voice gave the Prince the first consolation that his wounded pride had received during this audience, and this grain of happiness furnished him with a speech that gratified his vanity.

"Very well," he said, "I am the most reasonable of the three; I choose to make a complete elimination of my position in the world. I am going to speak *as a friend"*; and he added, with a fine smile of condescension, beautifully copied from the brave days of Louis XIV, *"like a friend*

*speaking to friends.* Signora Duchessa," he went on, "what is to be done to make you forget an untimely resolution?"

"Truly, I can think of nothing," replied the Duchessa with a deep sigh, "truly, I can think of nothing, I have such a horror of Parma." There was no epigrammatic intention in this speech; one could see that sincerity itself spoke through her lips.

The Conte turned sharply towards her; his courtier's soul was scandalised; then he addressed a suppliant gaze to the Prince. With great dignity and coolness the Prince allowed a moment to pass; then, addressing the Conte:

"I see," he said, "that your charming friend is altogether beside herself; it is quite simple, she *adores* her nephew." And, turning towards the Duchessa, he went on with a glance of the utmost gallantry and at the same time with the air which one adopts when quoting a line from a play: *"What must one do to please those lovely eyes?"*

The Duchessa had had time for reflexion; in a firm and measured tone, and as though she were dictating her *ultimatum,* she replied:

"His Highness might write me a gracious letter, as he knows so well how to do; he might say to me that, not being at all convinced of the guilt of Fabrizio del Dongo, First Grand Vicar of the Archbishop, he will not sign the sentence when it is laid before him, and that these unjust proceedings shall have no consequences in the future."

"What, *unjust!*" cried the Prince, colouring to the whites of his eyes, and recovering his anger.

"That is not all," replied the Duchessa, with a Roman pride, *"this very evening,* and," she added, looking at the clock, "it is already a quarter past eleven,—this very evening His Serene Highness will send word to the Marchesa Raversi that he advises her to retire to the country to recover from the fatigue which must have been caused

her by a certain prosecution of which she was speaking in her drawing-room in the early hours of the evening." The Prince was pacing the floor of his cabinet like a madman.

"Did anyone ever see such a woman?" he cried. "She is wanting in respect for me!"

The Duchessa replied with inimitable grace:

"Never in my life have I had a thought of shewing want of respect for His Serene Highness; His Highness has had the extreme condescension to say that he was speaking *as a friend to friends.* I have, moreover, no desire to remain at Parma," she added, looking at the Conte with the utmost contempt. This look decided the Prince, hitherto highly uncertain, though his words had seemed to promise a pledge; he paid little attention to words.

There was still some further discussion; but at length Conte Mosca received the order to write the gracious note solicited by the Duchessa. He omitted the phrase: *these unjust proceedings shall have no consequences in the future.* "It is enough," the Conte said to himself, "that the Prince shall promise not to sign the sentence which will be laid before him." The Prince thanked him with a quick glance as he signed.

The Conte was greatly mistaken; the Prince was tired and would have signed anything. He thought that he was getting well out of the difficulty, and the whole affair was coloured in his eyes by the thought: "If the Duchessa goes, I shall find my court become boring within a week." The Conte noticed that his master altered the date to that of the following day. He looked at the clock: it pointed almost to midnight. The Minister saw nothing more in this correction of the date than a pedantic desire to show a proof of exactitude and good government. As for the banishment of the Marchesa Raversi, he made no objection;

the Prince took a particular delight in banishing people.

"General Fontana!" he cried, opening the door a little way.

The General appeared with a face shewing so much astonishment and curiosity, that a merry glance was exchanged by the Duchessa and Conte, and this glance made peace between them.

"General Fontana," said the Prince, "you will get into my carriage, which is waiting under the colonnade; you will go to the Marchesa Raversi's, you will send in your name; if she is in bed, you will add that you come from me, and, on entering her room, you will say these precise words and no others: 'Signora Marchesa Raversi, His Serene Highness requests you to leave to-morrow morning, before eight o'clock, for your *castello* at Velleja; His Highness will let you know when you may return to Parma.' "

The Prince's eyes sought those of the Duchessa, who, without giving him the thanks he expected, made him an extremely respectful curtsey, and swiftly left the room.

"What a woman!" said the Prince, turning to Conte Mosca.

The latter, delighted at the banishment of the Marchesa Raversi, which simplified all his ministerial activities, talked for a full half-hour like a consummate courtier; he sought to console his Sovereign's injured vanity, and did not take his leave until he saw him fully convinced that the historical anecdotes of Louis XIV included no fairer page than that with which he had just provided his own future historians.

On reaching home the Duchessa shut her doors, and gave orders that no one was to be admitted, not even the Conte. She wished to be left alone with herself, and to consider for a little what idea she ought to form of the scene that had just occurred. She had acted at random and for her own immediate pleasure; but to whatever course

she might have let herself be induced to take she would have clung with tenacity. She had not blamed herself in the least on recovering her coolness, still less had she repented; such was the character to which she owed the position of being still, in her thirty-seventh year, the best looking woman at court.

She was thinking at this moment of what Parma might have to offer in the way of attractions, as she might have done on returning after a long journey, so fully, between nine o'clock and eleven, had she believed that she was leaving the place for ever.

"That poor Conte did cut a ludicrous figure when he learned of my departure in the Prince's presence. . . . After all, he is a pleasant man, and has a very rare warmth of heart. He would have given up his Ministries to follow me. . . . But on the other hand, during five whole years, he has not had to find fault with me for a single aberration. How many women married before the altar could say as much to their lords and masters? It must be admitted that he is not self-important, he is no pedant; he gives one no desire to be unfaithful to him; when he is with me, he seems always to be ashamed of his power. . . . He cut a funny figure in the presence of his lord and master; if he was in the room now, I should kiss him. . . . But not for anything in the world would I undertake to amuse a Minister who had lost his portfolio; that is a malady which only death can cure, and . . . one which kills. What a misfortune it would be to become Minister when one was young! I must write to him; it is one of the things that he ought to know officially before he quarrels with his Prince. . . . But I am forgetting my good servants."

The Duchessa rang. Her women were still at work packing trunks, the carriage had drawn up under the portico, and was being loaded; all the servants who had

nothing else to do were gathered round this carriage, with tears in their eyes. Cecchina, who on great occasions, had the sole right to enter the Duchessa's room, told her all these details.

"Call them upstairs," said the Duchessa.

A moment later she passed into the waiting-room.

"I have been promised," she told them, "that the sentence passed on my nephew will not be signed by the Sovereign" (such is the term used in Italy), "and I am postponing my departure. We shall see whether my enemies have enough influence to alter this decision."

After a brief silence, the servants began to shout: *"Evviva la Signora Duchessa!"* and to applaud furiously. The Duchessa, who had gone into the next room, reappeared like an actress taking a *call,* made a little curtsey, full of grace, to her people, and said to them: *"My friends, I thank you."* Had she said the word, all of them at that moment would have marched on the Palace to attack it. She beckoned to a postilion, an old smuggler and a devoted servant, who followed her.

"You will disguise yourself as a *contadino* in easy circumstances, you will get out of Parma as best you can, hire a *sediola* and proceed as quickly as possible to Bologna. You will enter Bologna as a casual visitor and by the Florence gate, and you will deliver to Fabrizio, who is at the Pellegrino, a packet which Cecchina will give you. Fabrizio is in hiding, and is known there as Signor Giuseppe Bossi; do not give him away by any stupid action, do not appear to know him; my enemies will perhaps set spies on your track. Fabrizio will send you back here after a few hours or a few days: and it is on your return journey especially that you must use every precaution not to give him away."

"Ah! Marchesa Raversi's people!" cried the postilion.

"We are on the look-out for them, and if the Signora wished, they would soon be exterminated."

"Some other day, perhaps; but don't, as you value your life, do anything without orders from me."

It was a copy of the Prince's note which the Duchessa wished to send to Fabrizio; she could not resist the pleasure of making him amused, and added a word about the scene which had led up to the note; this word became a letter of ten pages. She had the postilion called back.

"You cannot start," she told him, "before four o'clock, when the gates are opened."

"I was thinking of going out by the big conduit; I should be up to my neck in water, but I should get through. . . ."

"No;" said the Duchessa, "I do not wish to expose one of my most faithful servants to the risk of fever. Do you know anyone in the Archbishop's household?"

"The second coachman is a friend of mine."

"Here is a letter for that saintly prelate; make your way quietly into his Palace, get them to take you to his valet; I do not wish Monsignore to be awakened. If he has retired to his room, spend the night in the Palace, and, as he is in the habit of rising at dawn, to-morrow morning, at four o'clock, have yourself announced as coming from me, ask the holy Archbishop for his blessing, hand him the packet you see here, and take the letters that he will perhaps give you for Bologna."

The Duchessa addressed to the Archbishop the actual original of the Prince's note; as this note concerned his First Grand Vicar, she begged him to deposit it among the archives of the Palace, where she hoped that their Reverences the Grand Vicars and Canons, her nephew's colleagues, would be so good as to acquaint themselves with its contents; the whole transaction to be kept in the most profound secrecy.

The Duchessa wrote to Monsignor Landriani with a familiarity which could not fail to charm that honest plebeian; the signature alone filled three lines; the letter, couched in the most friendly tone, was followed by the words: *Angelina-Cornelia-Isotta Valserra del Dongo, duchessa Sanseverina.*

"I don't believe I have signed all that," the Duchessa said to herself, "since my marriage contract with the poor Duca; but one only gets hold of those people with that sort of thing, and in the eyes of the middle classes the caricature looks like beauty." She could not bring the evening to an end without yielding to the temptation to write to the poor Conte; she announced to him officially, for his *guidance,* she said, *in his relations with crowned heads,* that she did not feel herself to be capable of amusing a Minister in disgrace. "The Prince frightens you; when you are no longer in a position to see him, will it be my business to frighten you?" She had this letter taken to him at once.

For his part, that morning at seven o'clock, the Prince sent for Conte Zurla, the Minister of the Interior.

"Repeat," he told him, "the strictest orders to every *podestà* to have Signor Fabrizio del Dongo arrested. We are informed that possibly he may dare to reappear in our States. This fugitive being now at Bologna, where he seems to defy the judgment of our tribunals, post the *sbirri* who know him by sight: (1) in the villages on the road from Bologna to Parma; (2) in the neighbourhood of Duchessa Sanseverina's *castello* at Sacca, and of her house at Castelnuovo; (3) round Conte Mosca's *castello.* I venture to hope from your great sagacity, Signor Conte, that you will manage to keep all knowledge of these, your Sovereign's orders, from the curiosity of Conte Mosca. Understand that I wish Signor Fabrizio del Dongo to be arrested."

As soon as the Minister had left him, a secret door introduced into the Prince's presence the Fiscal General, Rassi, who came towards him bent double, and bowing at every step. The face of this rascal was a picture; it did full justice to the infamy of the part he had to play, and, while the rapid and extravagant movements of his eyes betrayed his consciousness of his own merits, the arrogant and grimacing assurance of his mouth showed that he knew how to fight against contempt.

As this personage is going to acquire a considerable influence over Fabrizio's destiny, we may say a word here about him. He was tall, he had fine eyes that shewed great intelligence, but a face ruined by smallpox; as for brains, he had them in plenty, and of the finest quality; it was admitted that he had an exhaustive knowledge of the law, but it was in the quality of resource that he specially shone. Whatever the aspect in which a case might be laid before him, he easily and in a few moments discovered the way, thoroughly well founded in law, to arrive at a conviction or an acquittal; he was above all a past-master of the hair-splittings of a prosecutor.

In this man, whom great Monarchs might have envied the Prince of Parma, one passion only was known to exist: he loved to converse with eminent personages and to please them by buffooneries. It mattered little to him whether the powerful personage laughed at what he said or at his person, or uttered revolting pleasantries at the expense of Signora Rassi; provided that he saw the great man laugh and was himself treated as a familiar, he was content. Sometimes the Prince, at a loss how further to insult the dignity of this Chief Justice, would actually kick him; if the kicks hurt him, he would begin to cry. But the instinct of buffoonery was so strong in him that he might be seen every day frequenting the drawing-room of a Minister who scoffed at him, in preference to his own

drawing-room where he exercised a despotic rule over all the stuff gowns of the place. This Rassi had above all created for himself a place apart, in that it was impossible for the most insolent noble to humiliate him; his method of avenging himself for the insults which he had to endure all day long was to relate them to the Prince, in whose presence he had acquired the privilege of saying anything; it is true that the reply often took the form of a well-directed cuff, which hurt him, but he stood on no ceremony about that. The presence of this Chief Justice used to distract the Prince in his moments of ill-humour; then he amused himself by outraging him. It can be seen that Rassi was almost the perfect courtier: a man without honour and without humour.

"Secrecy is essential above all things," the Prince shouted to him without greeting him, treating him, in fact, exactly as he would have treated a scullion, he who was so polite to everybody. "From when is your sentence dated?"

"Serene Highness, from yesterday morning."

"By how many judges is it signed?"

"By all five."

"And the penalty?"

"Twenty years in a fortress, as Your Serene Highness told me."

"The death penalty would have given offence," said the Prince, as though speaking to himself; "it is a pity! What an effect on that woman! But he is a del Dongo, and that name is revered in Parma, on account of the three Archbishops, almost in direct sequence. . . . You say twenty years in a fortress?"

"Yes, Serene Highness," replied the Fiscal, still on his feet and bent double; "with, as a preliminary, a public apology before His Serene Highness's portrait; and, in addition, a diet of bread and water every Friday and on the Vigils of the principal Feasts, *the accused being no-*

*torious for his impiety.* This is with an eye to the future and to put a stop to his career."

"Write," said the Prince: " 'His Serene Highness having deigned to turn a considerate ear to the most humble supplications of the Marchesa del Dongo, the culprit's mother, and of the Duchessa Sanseverina, his aunt, which ladies have represented to him that at the date of the crime their son and nephew was extremely young, and in addition led astray by an insensate passion conceived for the wife of the unfortunate Giletti, has been graciously pleased, notwithstanding the horror inspired by such a murder, to commute the penalty to which Fabrizio del Dongo has been sentenced to that of twelve years in a fortress.'

"Give it to me to sign."

The Prince signed and dated the sentence from the previous day; then, handing it back to Rassi, said to him: "Write immediately beneath my signature: 'The Duchessa Sanseverina having once again thrown herself before the knees of His Highness, the Prince has given permission that every Thursday the prisoner may take exercise for one hour on the platform of the square tower, commonly called Torre Farnese.'

"Sign that," said the Prince, "and, don't forget, keep your mouth shut, whatever you may hear said in the town. You will tell Councillor De' Capitani, who voted for two years in a fortress, and even made a speech upholding so ridiculous a sentence, that I expect him to refresh his memory of the laws and regulations. Once again silence, and good night." Fiscal Rassi performed with great deliberation three profound reverences to which the Prince paid no attention.

This happened at seven o'clock in the morning. A few hours later, the news of the Marchesa Raversi's banishment spread through the town and among the *caffè*: everyone was talking at once of this great event. The Mar-

chesa's banishment drove away for some time from Parma that implacable enemy of small towns and small courts, boredom. General Fabio Conti, who had regarded himself as a Minister already, feigned an attack of gout, and for several days did not emerge from his fortress. The middle classes, and consequently the populace, concluded from what was happening that it was clear that the Prince had decided to confer the Archbishopric of Parma on Monsignor del Dongo. The shrewd politicians of the *caffè* went so far as to assert that Father Landriani, the reigning Archbishop, had been ordered to plead ill health and to send in his resignation; he was to be awarded a fat pension from the tobacco duty, they were positive about it; this report reached the Archbishop himself, who was greatly alarmed, and for several days his zeal for our hero was considerably paralysed. Two months later, this fine piece of news found its way into the Paris newspapers, with the slight alteration that it was Conte Mosca, nephew of the Duchessa Sanseverina, who was to be made Archbishop.

The Marchesa Raversi meanwhile was raging in her Castello di Velleja; she was by no means one of those little feather-pated women who think that they are avenging themselves when they say damaging things about their enemies. On the day following her disgrace, Cavaliere Riscara and three more of her friends presented themselves before the Prince by her order, and asked him for permission to go to visit her at her *castello.* His Highness received these gentlemen with perfect grace, and their arrival at Velleja was a great consolation to the Marchesa. Before the end of the second week, she had thirty people in her *castello,* all those whom the Liberal Ministry was going to bring into power. Every evening, the Marchesa held a regular council with the better informed of her friends. One day, on which she had received a number of letters from Parma and Bologna, she retired to bed

early: her maid let into the room, first of all the reigning lover, Conte Baldi, a young man of admirable appearance and complete insignificance, and, later on, Cavaliere Riscara, his predecessor: this was a small man dark in complexion and in character, who having begun by being instructor in geometry at the College of Nobles at Parma, now found himself a Councillor of State and a Knight of several Orders.

"I have the good habit," the Marchesa said to these two men, "of never destroying any paper; and well it has served me; here are nine letters which the Sanseverina has written me on different occasions. You will both of you proceed to Genoa, you will look among the gaol-birds there for an ex-lawyer named Burati, like the great Venetian poet, or else Durati. You, Conte Baldi, sit down at my desk and write what I am going to dictate to you.

> "'An idea has occurred to me, and I write you a line. I am going to my cottage, by Castelnuovo; if you care to come over and spend a day with me, I shall be most delighted; there is, it seems to me, no great danger after what has just happened; the clouds are lifting. However, stop before you come to Castelnuovo; you will find one of my people on the road; they are all madly devoted to you. You will, of course, keep the name Bossi for this little expedition. They tell me that you have grown a beard like the most perfect Capuchin, and nobody has seen you at Parma except with the decent countenance of a Grand Vicar.'

"Do you follow me, Riscara?"

"Perfectly; but the journey to Genoa is an unnecessary extravagance; I know a man in Parma who, to be accurate, is not yet in the galleys, but cannot fail to get there

in the end. He will counterfeit the Sanseverina's hand to perfection."

At these words, Conte Baldi opened those fine eyes of his to their full extent; he had only just understood.

"If you know this worthy personage of Parma, who, you hope, will obtain advancement," said the Marchesa to Riscara, "presumably he knows you also: his mistress, his confessor, his bosom friend may have been bought by the Sanseverina: I should prefer to postpone this little joke for a few days and not to expose myself to any risk. Start in a couple of hours like good little lambs, don't see a living soul at Genoa, and return quickly." Cavaliere Riscara fled from the room laughing, and squeaking through his nose like Punchinello. *"We must pack up our traps!"* he said as he ran in a burlesque fashion. He wished to leave Baldi alone with the lady. Five days later, Riscara brought the Marchesa back her Conte Baldi, flayed alive; to cut off six leagues, they had made him cross a mountain on mule-back; he vowed that nothing would ever induce him again to take *long journeys*. Baldi handed the Marchesa three copies of the letter which she had dictated to him, and five or six other letters in the same hand, composed by Riscara, which might perhaps be put to some use later on. One of these letters contained some very pretty witticisms with regard to the fears from which the Prince suffered at night, and to the deplorable thinness of the Marchesa Balbi, his mistress, who left a dint in the sofa-cushions, it was said, like the mark made by a pair of tongs, after she had sat on them for a moment. Anyone would have sworn that all these letters came from the hand of Signora Sanseverina.

"Now I know, beyond any doubt," said the Marchesa, "that the favoured lover, Fabrizio, is at Bologna or in the immediate neighbourhood. . . ."

"I am too unwell," cried Conte Baldi, interrupting her;

"I ask as a favour to be excused this second journey, or at least I should like to have a few days' rest to recover my health."

"I shall go and plead your cause," said Riscara.

He rose and spoke in an undertone to the Marchesa.

"Oh, very well, then, I consent," she replied with a smile. "Reassure yourself, you shall not go at all," she told Baldi, with a certain air of contempt.

"Thank you," he cried in heart-felt accents. In the end, Riscara got into a post-chaise by himself. He had scarcely been a couple of days in Bologna when he saw, in an open carriage, Fabrizio and little Marietta. "The devil!" he said to himself, "it seems, our future Archbishop doesn't let the time hang on his hands; we must let the Duchessa know about this, she will be charmed." Riscara had only to follow Fabrizio to discover his address; next morning our hero received from a courier the letter forged at Genoa; he thought it a trifle short, but apart from that suspected nothing. The thought of seeing the Duchessa and Conte again made him wild with joy, and in spite of anything Lodovico might say he took a post-horse and went off at a gallop. Without knowing it, he was followed at a short distance by Cavaliere Riscara, who on coming to a point six leagues from Parma, at the stage before Castelnuovo, had the satisfaction of seeing a crowd on the *piazza* outside the local prison; they had just led in our hero, recognised at the post-house, as he was changing horses, by two *sbirri* who had been selected and sent there by Conte Zurla.

Cavaliere Riscara's little eyes sparkled with joy; he informed himself, with exemplary patience, of everything that had occurred in this little village, then sent a courier to the Marchesa Raversi. After which, roaming the streets as though to visit the church, which was of great interest, and then to look for a picture by the Parmigianino which,

he had been told, was to be found in the place, he finally ran into the *podestà*, who was obsequious in paying his respects to a Councillor of State. Riscara appeared surprised that he had not immediately dispatched to the citadel of Parma the conspirator whose arrest he had had the good fortune to secure.

"There is reason to fear," Riscara added in an indifferent tone, "that his many friends, who were endeavouring, the day before yesterday, to facilitate his passage through the States of His Highness, may come into conflict with the police; there were at least twelve or fifteen of these rebels, mounted."

*"Intelligenti pauca!"* cried the *podestà* with a cunning air.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A COUPLE of hours later, the unfortunate Fabrizio, fitted with handcuffs and actually attached by a long chain to the *sediola* into which he had been made to climb, started for the citadel of Parma, escorted by eight constables. These had orders to take with them all the constables stationed in the villages through which the procession had to pass; the *podestà* in person followed this important prisoner. About seven o'clock in the evening the *sediola*, escorted by all the little boys in Parma and by thirty constables, came down the fine avenue of trees, passed in front of the little *palazzo* in which Fausta had been living a few months earlier, and finally presented itself at the outer gate of the citadel just as General Fabio Conti and his daughter were coming out. The governor's carriage stopped before reaching the drawbridge to make way for the *sediola* to which Fabrizio was attached; the General instantly shouted for the gates to be shut, and hastened down to the turnkey's office to see what was the matter; he was not a little surprised when he recognised the prisoner, who had grown quite stiff after being fastened to his *sediola* throughout such a long journey; four constables had lifted him down and were carrying him into the turnkey's office. "So I have in my power," thought the feather-pated governor, "that famous Fabrizio del Dongo, with whom anyone would say that for the last year the high society of Parma had taken a vow to occupy themselves exclusively!"

The General had met him a score of times at court, at

the Duchessa's and elsewhere; but he took good care not to shew any sign that he knew him; he was afraid of compromising himself.

"Have a report made out," he called to the prison clerk, "in full detail of the surrender made to me of the prisoner by his worship the *podestà* of Castelnuovo."

Barbone, the clerk, a terrifying personage owing to the volume of his beard and his martial bearing, assumed an air of even greater importance than usual; one would have called him a German gaoler. Thinking he knew that it was chiefly the Duchessa Sanseverina who had prevented his master from becoming Minister of War, he was behaving with more than his ordinary insolence towards the prisoner; in speaking to him he used the pronoun *voi*, which in Italy is the formula used in addressing servants.

"I am a prelate of the Holy Roman Church," Fabrizio said to him firmly, "and Grand Vicar of this Diocese; my birth alone entitles me to respect."

"I know nothing about that!" replied the clerk pertly; "prove your assertions by shewing the brevets which give you a right to those highly respectable titles."

Fabrizio had no such documents and did not answer. General Fabio Conti, standing by the side of his clerk, watched him write without raising his eyes to the prisoner, so as not to be obliged to admit that he was really Fabrizio del Dongo.

Suddenly Clelia Conti, who was waiting in the carriage, heard a tremendous racket in the guard-room. The clerk Barbone, in making an insolent and extremely long description of the prisoner's person, ordered him to undo his clothing in order to verify and put on record the number and condition of the scars received by him in his fight with Giletti.

"I cannot," said Fabrizio, smiling bitterly; "I am not

in a position to obey the gentleman's orders, these handcuffs make it impossible."

"What!" cried the General with an innocent air, "the prisoner is handcuffed! Inside the fortress! That is against the rules, it requires an order *ad hoc;* take the handcuffs off him."

Fabrizio looked at him: "There's a nice Jesuit," he thought; "for the last hour he has seen me with these handcuffs, which have been hurting me horribly, and he pretends to be surprised!"

The handcuffs were taken off by the constables; they had just learned that Fabrizio was the nephew of the Duchessa Sanseverina, and made haste to shew him a honeyed politeness which formed a sharp contrast to the rudeness of the clerk; the latter seemed annoyed by this and said to Fabrizio, who stood there without moving:

"Come along, there! Hurry up, shew us those scratches you got from poor Giletti, the time he was murdered." With a bound, Fabrizio sprang upon the clerk, and dealt him such a blow that Barbone fell from his chair against the General's legs. The constables seized hold of the arms of Fabrizio, who made no attempt to resist them; the General himself and two constables who were standing by him hastened to pick up the clerk, whose face was bleeding copiously. Two subordinates who stood farther off ran to shut the door of the office, in the idea that the prisoner was trying to escape. The *brigadiere* who was in command of them thought that young del Dongo could not make a serious attempt at flight, since after all he was in the interior of the citadel; at the same time, he went to the window to put a stop to any disorder, and by a professional instinct. Opposite this open window and within a few feet of it the General's carriage was drawn up: Clelia had shrunk back inside it, so as not to be a witness of the

painful scene that was being enacted in the office; when she heard all this noise, she looked out.

"What is happening?" she asked the *brigadiere.*

"Signorina, it is young Fabrizio del Dongo who has just given that insolent Barbone a proper smack!"

"What! It is Signor del Dongo that they are taking to prison?"

"Eh! No doubt about that," said the *brigadiere;* "it is because of the poor young man's high birth that they are making all this fuss; I thought the Signorina knew all about it." Clelia remained at the window: when the constables who were standing round the table moved away a little she caught a glimpse of the prisoner. "Who would ever have said," she thought, "that I should see him again for the first time in this sad plight, when I met him on the road from the Lake of Como? . . . He gave me his hand to help me into his mother's carriage. . . . He had the Duchessa with him even then! Had they begun to love each other as long ago as that?"

It should be explained to the reader that the members of the Liberal Party swayed by the Marchesa Raversi and General Conti affected to entertain no doubt as to the tender intimacy that must exist between Fabrizio and the Duchessa. Conte Mosca, whom they abhorred, was the object of endless pleasantries for the way in which he was being deceived.

"So," thought Clelia, "there he is a prisoner, and a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. For after all, Conte Mosca, angel as one would like to think him, will be delighted when he hears of this capture."

A loud burst of laughter sounded from the guard-room.

"Jacopo," she said to the *brigadiere* in a voice that quivered with emotion, "what in the world is happening?"

"The General asked the prisoner sharply why he had struck Barbone: Monsignor Fabrizio answered calmly:

'He called me *assassino;* let him produce the titles and brevets which authorise him to give me that title'; and they all laughed."

A gaoler who could write took Barbone's place; Clelia saw the latter emerge mopping with his handkerchief the blood that streamed in abundance from his hideous face; he was swearing like a heathen: "That f— Fabrizio," he shouted at the top of his voice, "I'll have his life, I will, if I have to steal the hangman's rope." He had stopped between the office window and the General's carriage, and his oaths redoubled.

"Move along there," the *brigadiere* told him; "you mustn't swear in front of the Signorina."

Barbone raised his head to look at the carriage, his eyes met those of Clelia who could not repress a cry of horror; never had she seen at such close range so atrocious an expression upon any human face. "He will kill Fabrizio!" she said to herself, "I shall have to warn Don Cesare." This was her uncle, one of the most respected priests in the town; General Conti, his brother, had procured for him the post of *economo* and principal chaplain in the prison.

The General got into the carriage.

"Would you rather stay at home," he said to his daughter, "or wait for me, perhaps for some time, in the courtyard of the Palace? I must go and report all this to the Sovereign."

Fabrizio came out of the office escorted by three constables; they were taking him to the room which had been allotted to him. Clelia looked out of the window, the prisoner was quite close to her. At that moment she answered her father's question in the words: *"I will go with you."* Fabrizio, hearing these words uttered close to his ear, raised his eyes and met the girl's gaze. He was struck, especially, by the expression of melancholy on her

face. "How she has improved," he thought, "since our meeting near Como! What an air of profound thought! . . . They are quite right to compare her with the Duchessa; what angelic features!" Barbone, the blood-stained clerk, who had not taken his stand beside the carriage without a purpose, held up his hand to stop the three constables who were leading Fabrizio away, and, moving round behind the carriage until he reached the window next which the General was sitting:

"As the prisoner has committed an act of violence in the interior of the citadel," he said to him, "in consideration of Article 157 of the regulations, would it not be as well to put the handcuffs on him for three days?"

"Go to the devil!" cried the General, still considerably embarrassed by this arrest. It was important for him that he should not drive either the Duchessa or Conte Mosca to extremes; and besides, what attitude was the Conte going to adopt towards this affair? After all, the murder of a Giletti was a mere trifle, and only intrigue had succeeded in magnifying it into anything of importance.

During this brief dialogue, Fabrizio stood superb among the group of constables, his expression was certainly the proudest and most noble that one could imagine; his fine and delicate features, and the contemptuous smile that strayed over his lips made a charming contrast with the coarse appearance of the constables who stood round him. But all this formed, so to speak, only the external part of his physiognomy; he was enraptured by the heavenly beauty of Clelia, and his eye betrayed his surprise to the full. She, profoundly pensive, had never thought of drawing back her head from the window; he bowed to her with a half-smile of the utmost respect; then, after a moment's silence:

"It seems to me, Signorina," he said to her, "that, once

before, near a lake, I had the honour of meeting you, in the company of the police."

Clelia blushed, and was so taken aback that she could find no words in which to reply. "What a noble air among all those coarse creatures," she had been saying to herself at the moment when Fabrizio spoke to her. The profound pity, we might almost say the tender emotion in which she was plunged deprived her of the presence of mind necessary to find words, no matter what; she became conscious of her silence and blushed all the deeper. At this moment the bolts of the great gate of the citadel were drawn back with a clang; had not His Excellency's carriage been waiting for at least a minute? The echo was so loud in this vaulted passage that even if Clelia had found something to say in reply Fabrizio could not have caught her words.

Borne away by the horses which had broken into a gallop immediately after crossing the drawbridge, Clelia said to herself: "He must have thought me very silly!" Then suddenly she added: "Not only silly; he must have felt that I had a base nature, he must have thought that I did not respond to his greeting because he is a prisoner and I am the governor's daughter."

The thought of such a thing was terrible to this girl of naturally lofty soul. "What makes my behaviour absolutely degrading," she went on, "is that before, when we met for the first time, also *in the company of the police*, as he said just now, it was I who was the prisoner, and he did me a service, and helped me out of a very awkward position. . . . Yes, I am bound to admit, my behaviour was quite complete, it combined rudeness and ingratitude. Alas, poor young man! Now that he is in trouble, everybody is going to behave disgracefully to him. Even if he did say to me then: 'You will remember my name, I hope, at Parma?' how he must be despising me at this moment!

It would have been so easy to say a civil word! Yes, I must admit, my conduct towards him has been atrocious. The other time, but for the generous offer of his mother's carriage, I should have had to follow the constables on foot through the dust, or, what would have been far worse, ride pillion behind one of them; it was my father then who was under arrest, and I defenceless! Yes, my behaviour is complete. And how keenly a nature like his must have felt it! What a contrast between his noble features and my behaviour! What nobility! What serenity! How like a hero he looked, surrounded by his vile enemies! Now I understand the Duchessa's passion: if he looks like that in distressing circumstances which may end in frightful disaster, what must he be like when his heart is happy!"

The governor's carriage waited for more than an hour and a half in the courtyard of the Palace, and yet, when the General returned from his interview with the Prince, Clelia by no means felt that he had stayed there too long.

"What is His Highness's will?" asked Clelia.

"His tongue said: Prison! His eyes: Death!"

"Death! Great God!" exclaimed Clelia.

"There now, be quiet!" said the General crossly; "what a fool I am to answer a child's questions."

Meanwhile Fabrizio was climbing the three hundred and eighty steps which led to the Torre Farnese, a new prison built on the platform of the great tower, at a prodigious height from the ground. He never once thought, distinctly that is to say, of the great change that had just occurred in his fortunes. "What eyes!" he said to himself: "What a wealth of expression in them! What profound pity! She looked as though she were saying: 'Life is such a tangled skein of misfortunes! Do not distress yourself too much about what is happening to you! Are we not sent here below to be unhappy?' How those fine eyes of hers remained fastened on me, even when the horses

were moving forward with such a clatter under the arch!"

Fabrizio completely forgot to feel wretched.

Clelia accompanied her father to various houses; in the early part of the evening no one had yet heard the news of the arrest of the *great culprit*, for such was the name which the courtiers bestowed a couple of hours later on this poor, rash young man.

It was noticed that evening that there was more animation than usual in Clelia's face; whereas animation, the air of taking part in what was going on round her, was just what was chiefly lacking in that charming young person. When you compared her beauty with that of the Duchessa, it was precisely that air of not being moved by anything, that manner as though of a person superior to everything, which weighed down the balance in her rival's favour. In England, in France, lands of vanity, the general opinion would probably have been just the opposite. Clelia Conti was a young girl still a trifle too slim, who might be compared to the beautiful models of Guido Reni. We make no attempt to conceal the fact that, according to Greek ideas of beauty, the objection might have been made that her head had certain features a trifle too strongly marked; the lips, for instance, though full of the most touching charm, were a little too substantial.

The admirable peculiarity of this face in which shone the artless graces and the heavenly imprint of the most noble soul was that, albeit of the rarest and most singular beauty, it did not in any way resemble the heads of Greek sculpture. The Duchessa had, on the other hand, a little too much of the *recognised* beauty of the ideal type, and her truly Lombard head recalled the voluptuous smile and tender melancholy of Leonardo's lovely paintings of Herodias. Just as the Duchessa shone, sparkled with wit and irony, attaching herself passionately, if one may use the

expression, to all the subjects which the course of the conversation brought before her mind's eye, so Clelia showed herself calm and slow to move, whether from contempt for her natural surroundings or from regret for some unfulfilled dream. It had long been thought that she would end by embracing the religious life. At twenty she was observed to show a repugnance towards going to balls, and if she accompanied her father to these entertainments it was only out of obedience to him and in order not to jeopardise the interests of his career.

"It is apparently going to be impossible for me," the General in his vulgarity of spirit was too prone to repeat, "heaven having given me as a daughter the most beautiful person in the States of our Sovereign, and the most virtuous, to derive any benefit from her for the advancement of my fortune! I live in too great isolation, I have only her in the world, and what I must absolutely have is a family that will support me socially, and will procure for me a certain number of houses where my merit, and especially my aptitude for ministerial office shall be laid down as unchallengeable postulates in any political discussion. And there is my daughter, so beautiful, so sensible, so religious, taking offence whenever a young man well established at court attempts to find favour in her sight. If the suitor is dismissed, her character becomes less sombre, and I see her appear almost gay, until another champion enters the lists. The handsomest man at court, Conte Baldi, presented himself and failed to please; the richest man in His Highness's States, the Marchese Crescenzi, has now followed him; she insists that he would make her miserable.

"Decidedly," the General would say at other times, "my daughter's eyes are finer than the Duchessa's, particularly as, on rare occasions, they are capable of assuming a more profound expression; but that magnificent expression, when

does anyone ever see it? Never in a drawing-room where she might do justice to it; but simply out driving alone with me, when she lets herself be moved, for instance, by the miserable state of some hideous rustic. 'Keep some reflexion of that sublime gaze,' I tell her at times, 'for the drawing-rooms in which we shall be appearing this evening.' Not a bit of it: should she condescend to accompany me into society, her pure and noble features present the somewhat haughty and scarcely encouraging expression of passive obedience." The General spared himself no trouble, as we can see, in his search for a suitable son-in-law, but what he said was true.

Courtiers, who have nothing to contemplate in their own hearts, notice every little thing that goes on round about them; they had observed that it was particularly on those days when Clelia could not succeed in making herself emerge from her precious musings and feign an interest in anything that the Duchessa chose to stop beside her and tried to make her talk. Clelia had hair of an ashen fairness, which stood out with a charming effect against cheeks that were delicately tinted but, as a rule, rather too pale. The mere shape of her brow might have told an attentive observer that that air, so instinct with nobility, that manner, so far superior to vulgar charms, sprang from a profound indifference to everything that was vulgar. It was the absence and not the impossibility of interest in anything. Since her father had become governor of the citadel, Clelia had found happiness, or at least freedom from vexations in her lofty abode. The appalling number of steps that had to be climbed in order to reach this official residence of the governor, situated on the platform of the main tower, kept away tedious visitors, and Clelia, for this material reason, enjoyed the liberty of the convent; she found there almost all the ideal of happiness which at one time she had thought of seeking from the

religious life. She was seized by a sort of horror at the mere thought of putting her beloved solitude and her secret thoughts at the disposal of a young man whom the title of husband would authorise to disturb all this inner life. If, by her solitude, she did not attain to happiness, at least she had succeeded in avoiding sensations that were too painful.

On the evening after Fabrizio had been taken to the fortress, the Duchessa met Clelia at the party given by the Minister of the Interior, Conte Zurla; everyone gathered round them; that evening, Clelia's beauty outshone the Duchessa's. The beautiful eyes of the girl wore an expression so singular and so profound as to be almost indiscreet; there was pity, there were indignation also and anger in her gaze. The gaiety and brilliant ideas of the Duchessa seemed to plunge Clelia into spells of grief that bordered on horror. "What will be the cries and groans of this poor woman," she said to herself, "when she learns that her lover, that young man with so great a heart and so noble a countenance, has just been flung into prison? And that look in the Sovereign's eyes which condemns him to death! O Absolute Power, when wilt thou cease to crush down Italy! O base and venal souls! And I am the daughter of a gaoler! And I have done nothing to deny that noble station, for I did not deign to answer Fabrizio! And once before he was my benefactor! What can he be thinking of me at this moment, alone in his room with his little lamp for sole companion?" Revolted by this idea, Clelia cast a look of horror at the magnificent illumination of the drawing-rooms of the Minister of the Interior.

"Never," the word went round the circle of courtiers who had gathered round the two reigning beauties, and were seeking to join in their conversation, "never have they talked to one another with so animated and at the same

time so intimate an air. Can the Duchessa, who is always so careful to smooth away the animosities aroused by the Prime Minister, can she have thought of some great marriage for Clelia?" This conjecture was founded upon a circumstance which until then had never presented itself to the observation of the court: the girl's eyes shewed more fire, and indeed, if one may use the term, more passion than those of the beautiful Duchessa. The latter, for her part, was astonished, and, one may say it to her credit, delighted by the discovery of charms so novel in the young recluse; for an hour she had been gazing at her with a pleasure by no means commonly felt in the sight of a rival. "Why, what can have happened?" the Duchessa asked herself; "never has Clelia looked so beautiful, or, one might say, so touching: can her heart have spoken? . . . But in that case, certainly, it is an unhappy love, there is a dark grief at the root of this strange animation. . . . But unhappy love keeps silent. Can it be a question of recalling a faithless lover by shining in society?" And the Duchessa gazed with attention at all the young men who stood round them. Nowhere could she see any unusual expression, every face shone with a more or less pleased fatuity. "But a miracle must have happened," the Duchessa told herself, vexed by her inability to solve the mystery. "Where is Conte Mosca, that man of discernment? No, I am not mistaken, Clelia is looking at me attentively, and as if I was for her the object of a quite novel interest. Is it the effect of some order received from her father, that vile courtier? I supposed that young and noble mind to be incapable of lowering itself to any pecuniary consideration. Can General Fabio Conti have some decisive request to make of the Conte?"

About ten o'clock, a friend of the Duchessa came up to her and murmured a few words; she turned extremely pale: Clelia took her hand and ventured to press it.

"I thank you, and I understand you now . . . you have a noble heart," said the Duchessa, making an effort to control herself; she had barely the strength to utter these few words. She smiled profusely at the lady of the house, who rose to escort her to the door of the outermost drawing-room: such honours were due only to Princesses of the Blood, and were for the Duchessa an ironical comment on her position at the moment. And so she continued to smile at Contessa Zurla, but in spite of untold efforts did not succeed in uttering a single word.

Clelia's eyes filled with tears as she watched the Duchessa pass through these rooms, thronged at the moment with all the most brilliant figures in society. "What is going to happen to that poor woman," she wondered, "when she finds herself alone in her carriage? It would be an indiscretion on my part to offer to accompany her, I dare not. . . . And yet, what a consolation it would be to the poor prisoner, sitting in some wretched cell, if he knew that he was loved to such a point! What a frightful solitude that must be in which they have plunged him! And we, we are here in these brilliant rooms, how horrible! Can there be any way of conveying a message to him? Great God! That would be treachery to my father; his position is so delicate between the two parties! What will become of him if he exposes himself to the passionate hatred of the Duchessa, who controls the will of the Prime Minister, who in three out of every four things here is the master? On the other hand, the Prince takes an unceasing interest in everything that goes on at the fortress, and will not listen to any jest on that subject; fear makes him cruel. . . . In any case, Fabrizio" (Clelia no longer thought of him as Signor del Dongo) "is greatly to be pitied. . . . It is a very different thing for him from the risk of losing a lucrative post! . . . And the Duchessa! . . . What a terrible passion love is! . . . And yet all

those liars in society speak of it as a source of happiness! One is sorry for elderly women because they can no longer feel or inspire love. . . . Never shall I forget what I have just seen; what a sudden change! How those beautiful, radiant eyes of the Duchessa turned dull and dead after the fatal word which Marchese N—— came up and said to her! . . . Fabrizio must indeed be worthy of love!"

Breaking in upon these highly serious reflexions, which were absorbing the whole of Clelia's mind, the complimentary speeches which always surrounded her seemed to her even more distasteful than usual. To escape from them she went across to an open window, half-screened by a taffeta curtain; she hoped that no one would be so bold as to follow her into this sort of sanctuary. This window opened upon a little grove of orange-trees planted in the ground: as a matter of fact, every winter they had to be protected by a covering. Clelia inhaled with rapture the scent of their blossom, and this pleasure seemed to restore a little calm to her spirit. "I felt that he had a very noble air," she thought, "but to inspire such passion in so distinguished a woman! She has had the glory of refusing the Prince's homage, and if she had deigned to consent, she would have reigned as queen over his States. . . . My father says that the Sovereign's passion went so far as to promise to marry her if ever he became free to do so. . . . And this love for Fabrizio has lasted so long! For it is quite five years since we met them by the Lake of Como. . . . Yes, it is quite five years," she said to herself after a moment's reflexion. "I was struck by it even then, when so many things passed unnoticed before my childish eyes. How those two ladies seemed to admire Fabrizio! . . ."

Clelia remarked with joy that none of the young men who had been speaking to her with such earnestness had

ventured to approach her balcony. One of them, the Marchese Crescenzi, had taken a few steps in that direction, but had then stopped by a card-table. "If only," she said to herself, "under my window in our *palazzo* in the fortress, the only one that has any shade, I had some pretty orange-trees like these to look at, my thoughts would be less sad: but to have as one's sole outlook the huge blocks of stone of the Torre Farnese. . . . Ah!" she cried with a convulsive movement, "perhaps that is where they have put him. I must speak about it at once to Don Cesare! He will be less severe than the General. My father is certain to tell me nothing on our way back to the fortress, but I shall find out everything from Don Cesare. . . . I have money, I could buy a few orange-trees, which, placed under the window of my aviary, would prevent me from seeing that great wall of the Torre Farnese. How infinitely more hateful still it will be to me now that I know one of the people whom it hides from the light of day! . . . Yes, it is just the third time I have seen him. Once at court, at the ball on the Princess's birthday; to-day, hemmed in by three constables, while that horrible Barbone was begging for handcuffs to be put on him, and the other time by the Lake of Como. That is quite five years ago. What a hang-dog air he had then! How he stared at the constables, and what curious looks his mother and his aunt kept giving him. Certainly there must have been some secret that day, some special knowledge which they were keeping to themselves; at the time, I had an idea that he too was afraid of the police. . . ." Clelia shuddered; "But how ignorant I was! No doubt at that time the Duchessa had already begun to take an interest in him. How he made us laugh after the first few minutes, when the ladies, in spite of their obvious anxiety, had begun to grow more accustomed to the presence of a stranger! . . . And this evening I had not a

word to say in reply when he spoke to me. . . . O ignorance and timidity! How often you have the appearance of the blackest cowardice! And I am like this at twenty, yes and past twenty! . . . I was well-advised to think of the cloister; really I am good for nothing but retirement. 'Worthy daughter of a gaoler!' he will have been saying to himself. He despises me, and, as soon as he is able to write to the Duchessa, he will tell her of my want of consideration, and the Duchessa will think me a very deceitful little girl; for, after all, this evening she must have thought me full of sympathy with her in her trouble."

Clelia noticed that someone was approaching, apparently with the intention of taking his place by her side on the iron balcony of this window; she could not help feeling annoyed, although she blamed herself for being so; the meditations in which she was disturbed were by no means without their pleasant side. "Here comes some troublesome fellow to whom I shall give a warm welcome!" she thought. She was turning her head with a haughty stare, when she caught sight of the timid face of the Archbishop who was approaching the balcony by a series of almost imperceptible little movements. "This saintly man has no manners," thought Clelia. "Why come and disturb a poor girl like me? My tranquillity is the only thing I possess." She was greeting him with respect, but at the same time with a haughty air, when the prelate said to her:

"Signorina, have you heard the terrible news?"

The girl's eyes had at once assumed a totally different expression; but, following the instructions repeated to her a hundred times over by her father, she replied with an air of ignorance which the language of her eyes loudly contradicted:

"I have heard nothing, Monsignore."

"My First Grand Vicar, poor Fabrizio del Dongo, who is no more guilty than I am of the death of that brigand

Giletti, has been arrested at Bologna where he was living under the assumed name of Giuseppe Bossi; they have shut him up in your citadel; he arrived there actually *chained* to the carriage that brought him. A sort of gaoler, named Barbone, who was pardoned some time ago after murdering one of his own brothers, chose to attempt an act of personal violence against Fabrizio, but my young friend is not the man to take an insult quietly. He flung his infamous adversary to the ground, whereupon they cast him into a dungeon, twenty feet underground, after first putting handcuffs on his wrists."

"Not handcuffs, no!"

"Ah! Then you do know something," cried the Archbishop. And the old man's features lost their intense expression of discouragement. "But, before we go any farther, someone may come out on to this balcony and interrupt us: would you be so charitable as to convey personally to Don Cesare my pastoral ring here?"

The girl took the ring, but did not know where to put it for fear of losing it.

"Put it on your thumb," said the Archbishop; and he himself slipped the ring into position. "Can I count upon you to deliver this ring?"

"Yes, Monsignore."

"Will you promise me to keep secret what I am going to say, even if circumstances should arise in which you may find it inconvenient to agree to my request?"

"Why, yes, Monsignore," replied the girl, trembling all over as she observed the sombre and serious air which the old man had suddenly assumed. . . .

"Our estimable Archbishop," she went on, "can give me no orders that are not worthy of himself and me."

"Say to Don Cesare that I commend to him my adopted son; I know that the *sbirri* who carried him off did not give him time to take his breviary with him, I therefore

request Don Cesare to let him have his own, and if your uncle will send to-morrow to my Palace, I promise to replace the book given by him to Fabrizio. I request Don Cesare also to convey the ring which this pretty hand is now wearing to Signor del Dongo." The Archbishop was interrupted by General Fabio Conti, who came in search of his daughter to take her to the carriage; there was a brief interval of conversation in which the prelate shewed a certain adroitness. Without making any reference to the latest prisoner, he so arranged matters that the course of the conversation led naturally to the utterance of certain moral and political maxims by himself; for instance: "There are moments of crisis in the life of a court which decide for long periods the existence of the most exalted personages; it would be distinctly imprudent to change into *personal hatred* the state of political aloofness which is often the quite simple result of diametrically opposite positions." The Archbishop, letting himself be carried away to some extent by the profound grief which he felt at so unexpected an arrest, went so far as to say that one must undoubtedly strive to retain the position one holds, but that it would be a quite gratuitous imprudence to attract to oneself furious hatreds in consequence of lending oneself to certain actions which are never forgotten.

When the General was in the carriage with his daughter: "Those might be described as threats," he said to her. . . . "Threats, to a man of my sort!"

No other words passed between father and daughter for the next twenty minutes.

On receiving the Archbishop's pastoral ring, Clelia had indeed promised herself that she would inform her father, as soon as she was in the carriage, of the little service which the prelate had asked of her; but after the word *threats,* uttered with anger, she took it for granted that

her father would intercept the token; she covered the ring with her left hand and pressed it passionately. During the whole of the time that it took them to drive from the Ministry of the Interior to the citadel, she was asking herself whether it would be criminal on her part not to speak of the matter to her father. She was extremely pious, extremely timorous, and her heart, usually so tranquil, beat with an unaccustomed violence; but in the end the *chi va là* of the sentry posted on the rampart above the gate rang out on the approach of the carriage before Clelia had found a form of words calculated to incline her father not to refuse, so much afraid was she of his refusing. As they climbed the three hundred and sixty steps which led to the governor's residence, Clelia could think of nothing.

She hastened to speak to her uncle, who rebuked her and refused to lend himself to anything.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"WELL," cried the General, when he caught sight of his brother Don Cesare, "here is the Duchessa going to spend a hundred thousand scudi to make a fool of me and help the prisoner to escape!"

But, for the moment, we are obliged to leave Fabrizio in his prison, at the very summit of the citadel of Parma; he is well guarded and we shall perhaps find him a little altered when we return to him. We must now concern ourselves first of all with the court, where certain highly complicated intrigues, and in particular the passions of an unhappy woman are going to decide his fate. As he climbed the three hundred and ninety steps to his prison in the Torre Farnese, beneath the eyes of the governor, Fabrizio, who had so greatly dreaded this moment, found that he had no time to think of his misfortunes.

On returning home after the party at Conte Zurla's, the Duchessa dismissed her women with a wave of the hand; then, letting herself fall, fully dressed, on to her bed, *"Fabrizio,"* she cried aloud, *"is in the power of his enemies, and perhaps to spite me they will give him poison!"* How is one to depict the moment of despair that followed this statement of the situation in a woman so far from reasonable, so much the slave of every passing sensation, and, without admitting it to herself, desperately in love with the young prisoner? There were inarticulate cries, paroxysms of rage, convulsive movements, but never a tear.

She had sent her women away to conceal her tears; she thought that she was going to break into sobs as soon as she found herself alone; but tears, those first comforters in hours of great sorrow, completely failed her. Anger, indignation, the sense of her own inferiority when matched with the Prince, had too firm a mastery of this proud soul.

"Am I not humiliated enough?" she kept on exclaiming; "I am outraged, and, worse still, Fabrizio's life is in danger; and I have no means of vengeance! Wait a moment, my Prince; you kill me, well and good, you have the power to do so; but afterwards I shall have your life. Alas! Poor Fabrizio, how will that help you? What a difference from the day when I was proposing to leave Parma, and yet even then I thought I was unhappy . . . what blindness! I was going to break with all the habits and customs of a pleasant life; alas! without knowing it, I was on the edge of an event which was to decide my fate for ever. Had not the Conte, with the miserable fawning instinct of a courtier, omitted the words *unjust proceedings* from that fatal note which the Prince's vanity allowed me to secure, we should have been saved. I had had the good fortune (rather than the skill, I must admit) to bring into play his personal vanity on the subject of his beloved town of Parma. Then I threatened to leave, then I was free. . . . Great God! What sort of slave am I now? Here I am now nailed down in this foul sewer, and Fabrizio in chains in the citadel, in that citadel which for so many eminent men has been the ante-room of death; and I can no longer keep that tiger cowed by the fear of seeing me leave his den.

"He has too much sense not to realise that I will never move from the infamous tower in which my heart is enchained. Now, the injured vanity of the man may put

the oddest ideas into his head; their fantastic cruelty would but whet the appetite of his astounding vanity. If he returns to his former programme of insipid love-making, if he says to me: 'Accept the devotion of your slave or Fabrizio dies,'—well, there is the old story of Judith. . . . Yes, but if it is only suicide for me, it will be murder for Fabrizio; his fool of a successor, our Crown Prince, and the infamous headsman Rassi will have Fabrizio hanged as my accomplice."

The Duchessa wailed aloud: this dilemma, from which she could see no way of escape, was torturing her unhappy heart. Her distracted head could see no other probability in the future. For ten minutes she writhed like a mad-woman; then a sleep of utter exhaustion took the place for a few moments of this horrible state, life was crushed out. A few minutes later she awoke with a start and found herself sitting on her bed; she had dreamed that, in her presence, the Prince was going to cut off Fabrizio's head. With what haggard eyes the Duchessa stared round her! When at length she was convinced that neither Fabrizio nor the Prince was in the room with her, she fell back on her bed and was on the point of fainting. Her physical exhaustion was such, that she could not summon up enough strength to change her position. "Great God! If I could die!" she said to herself. . . . "But what cowardice, for me to abandon Fabrizio in his trouble! My wits are straying. . . . Come, let us get back to the facts; let us consider calmly the execrable position in which I have plunged myself, as though of my own free will. What a lamentable piece of stupidity to come and live at the court of an Absolute Prince! A tyrant who knows all his victims; every look they give him he interprets as a defiance of his power. Alas, that is what neither the Conte nor I took into account when we left Milan: I thought of the attrac-

tions of an amusing court; something inferior, it is true, but something in the same style as the happy days of Prince Eugène.

"Looking from without, we can form no idea of what is meant by the authority of a despot who knows all his subjects by sight. The outward form of despotism is the same as that of the other kinds of government: there are judges, for instance, but they are Rassis: the monster! He would see nothing extraordinary in hanging his own father if the Prince ordered him to do so. . . . He would call it his duty. . . . Seduce Rassi! Unhappy wretch that I am! I possess no means of doing so. What can I offer him? A hundred thousand francs, possibly: and they say that, after the last dagger-blow which the wrath of heaven against this unhappy country allowed him to escape, the Prince sent him ten thousand golden sequins in a casket. Besides, what sum of money would seduce him? That soul of mud, which has never read anything but contempt in the eyes of men, enjoys here the pleasure of seeing now fear, and even respect there; he may become Minister of Police, and why not? Then three-fourths of the inhabitants of the place will be his base courtiers, and will tremble before him in as servile a fashion as he himself trembles before his sovereign.

"Since I cannot fly this detested spot, I must be of use here to Fabrizio: live alone, in solitude, in despair!—what can I do then for Fabrizio? Come; *forward, unhappy woman!* Do your duty; go into society, pretend to think no more of Fabrizio. . . . Pretend to forget him, the dear angel!"

So speaking, the Duchessa burst into tears; at last she could weep. After an hour set apart for human frailty, she saw with some slight consolation that her mind was beginning to grow clearer. "To have the magic carpet," she said to herself, "to snatch Fabrizio from the citadel

and fly with him to some happy place where we could not be pursued, Paris for instance. We should live there, at first, on the twelve hundred francs which his father's agent transmits to me with so pleasing a regularity. I could easily gather together a hundred thousand francs from the remains of my fortune!" The Duchessa's imagination passed in review, with moments of unspeakable delight, all the details of the life which she would lead three hundred leagues from Parma. "There," she said to herself, "he could enter the service under an assumed name. . . . Placed in a regiment of those gallant Frenchmen, the young Valserra would speedily win a reputation; at last he would be happy."

These blissful pictures brought on a second flood of tears, but they were tears of joy. So happiness did exist then somewhere in the world! This state lasted for a long time; the poor woman had a horror of coming back to the contemplation of the grim reality. At length, as the light of dawn began to mark with a white line the tops of the trees in her garden, she forced herself into a state of composure. "In a few hours from now," she told herself, "I shall be on the field of battle; it will be a case for action, and if anything should occur to irritate me, if the Prince should take it into his head to say anything to me about Fabrizio, I am by no means certain that I can keep myself properly in control. I must therefore, here and now, *make plans.*

"If I am declared a State criminal, Rassi will seize everything there is in this *palazzo;* on the first of this month the Conte and I burned, as usual, all papers of which the police might make any improper use; and he is Minister of Police! That is the amusing part of it. I have three diamonds of some value; to-morrow, Fulgenzio, my old boatman from Grianta, will set off for Geneva, where he will deposit them in a safe place. Should Fabrizio

ever escape (Great God, be Thou propitious to me!" She crossed herself), "the unutterable meanness of the Marchese del Dongo will decide that it is a sin to supply food to a man pursued by a lawful Sovereign: then he will at least find my diamonds, he will have bread.

"Dismiss the Conte . . . being left alone with him, after what has happened, is the one thing I cannot face. The poor man! He is not bad really, far from it; he is only weak. That commonplace soul does not rise to the level of ours. Poor Fabrizio! Why cannot you be here for a moment with me to discuss our perils?

"The Conte's meticulous prudence would spoil all my plans, and besides, I must on no account involve him in my downfall. . . . For why should not the vanity of that tyrant cast me into prison? I shall have conspired . . . what could be easier to prove? If it should be to his citadel that he sent me, and I could manage, by bribery, to speak to Fabrizio, were it only for an instant, with what courage would we step out together to death! But enough of such follies: his Rassi would advise him to make an end of me with poison; my appearance in the streets, riding upon a cart, might touch the hearts of his dear Parmesans. . . . But what is this? Still romancing? Alas! These follies must be forgiven a poor woman whose actual lot is so piteous! The truth of all this is that the Prince will not send me to my death; but nothing could be more easy than to cast me into prison and keep me there; he will make his people hide all sorts of suspicious papers in some corner of my *palazzo,* as they did with that poor L——. Then three judges—not too big rascals, for they will have what is called *documentary evidence*—and a dozen false witnesses will be all he needs. So I may be sentenced to death as having conspired, and the Prince, in his boundless clemency, taking into consideration the fact that I have had the honour of being

admitted to his court, will commute my punishment to ten years in a fortress. But I, so as not to fall short in any way of that violent character which has led the Marchesa Raversi and my other enemies to say so many stupid things about me, will poison myself bravely. So, at least, the public will be kind enough to believe; but I wager that Rassi will appear in my cell to bring me gallantly, in the Prince's name, a little bottle of strychnine, or Perugia opium.

"Yes, I must quarrel in the most open manner with the Conte, for I do not wish to involve him in my downfall—that would be a scandalous thing; the poor man has loved me with such candour! My mistake lay in thinking that a true courtier would have sufficient heart left to be capable of love. Very probably the Prince will find some excuse for casting me into prison; he will be afraid of my perverting public opinion with regard to Fabrizio. The Conte is a man of perfect honour; at once he will do what the sycophants of this court, in their profound astonishment, will call madness, he will leave the court. I braved the Prince's authority on the evening of the note; I may expect anything from his wounded vanity: does a man who is born a Prince ever forget the sensation I gave him that evening? Besides, the Conte, once he has quarrelled with me, is in a stronger position for being of use to Fabrizio. But if the Conte, whom this decision of mine must plunge in despair, should avenge himself? . . . There, now, is an idea that would never occur to him; his is not a fundamentally base nature like the Prince's; the Conte may, with a sigh of protest, countersign a wicked decree, but he is a man of honour. And besides, avenge himself for what? Simply because, after loving him for five years without giving the slightest offence of his love, I say to him: 'Dear Conte, I had the good fortune to be in love with you: very well, that flame is burning low;

I no longer love you, but I know your heart through and through, I retain a profound regard for you and you will always be my best friend.'

"What answer can a *galantuomo* make to so sincere a declaration?

"I shall take a new lover, or so at least people will suppose; I shall say to this lover: 'After all, the Prince does right to punish Fabrizio's folly; but on the day of his *festa*, no doubt our gracious Sovereign will set him at liberty.' Thus I gain six months. The new lover whom prudence suggests to me would be that venal judge, that foul hangman of a Rassi. . . . He would find himself ennobled and, as far as that goes, I shall give him the right of entry into good society. Forgive me, dear Fabrizio; such an effort, for me, is beyond the bounds of possibility. What! That monster, still all bespattered with the blood of Conte P—— and of D——! I should faint with horror whenever he came near me, or rather I should seize a knife and plunge it into his vile heart. Do not ask of me things that are impossible!

"Yes, that is the first thing to do: forget Fabrizio! And not the least trace of anger with the Prince; I must resume my ordinary gaiety, which will seem all the more attractive to these souls of mud, in the first place because I shall appear to be submitting with good grace to their Sovereign's will, secondly because, so far from laughing at them, I shall take good care to bring out all their pretty little qualities; for instance, I shall compliment Conte Zurla on the beauty of the white feather in his hat, which he has just had sent him from Lyons by courier, and which keeps him perfectly happy.

"Choose a lover from the Raversi's party. . . . If the Conte goes, that will be the party in office; there is where the power will lie. It will be a friend of the Raversi that will reign over the citadel, for Fabio Conti will take

office as Minister. How in the world will the Prince, a man used to good society, a man of intelligence, accustomed to the charming collaboration of the Conte, be able to discuss business with that ox, that king of fools, whose whole life has been occupied with the fundamental problem: ought His Highness's troops to have seven buttons on their uniform, in front, or nine? It is all those brute beasts thoroughly jealous of myself, and that is where you are in danger, dear Fabrizio, it is those brute beasts who are going to decide my fate and yours! Well then, shall I not allow the Conte to hand in his resignation? Let him remain, even if he has to submit to humiliations. He always imagines that to resign is the greatest sacrifice a Prime Minister can make; and whenever his mirror tells him he is growing old, he offers me that sacrifice: a complete rupture, then; yes, and reconciliation only in the event of its being the sole method of prevailing upon him not to go. Naturally, I shall give him his dismissal in the friendliest possible way; but, after his courtierlike omission of the words *unjust proceedings* in the Prince's note, I feel that, if I am not to hate him, I need to spend some months without seeing him. On that decisive evening, I had no need of his cleverness; he had only to write down what I dictated to him, he had only to write those words *which I had obtained* by my own strength of character: he was led away by force of habit as a base courtier. He told me next day that he could not make the Prince sign an absurdity, that we should have had *letters of grace;* why, good God, with people like that, with those monsters of vanity and rancour who bear the name Farnese, one takes what one can get."

At the thought of this, all the Duchessa's anger was rekindled. "The Prince has betrayed me," she said to herself, "and in how dastardly a way! There is no excuse for the man: he has brains, discernment, he is capable

of reasoning; there is nothing base in him but his passions. The Conte and I have noticed it a score of times; his mind becomes vulgar only when he imagines that some one has tried to insult him. Well, Fabrizio's crime has nothing to do with politics, it is a trifling homicide, just like a hundred others that are reported every day in his happy States, and the Conte has sworn to me that he has taken pains to procure the most accurate information, and that Fabrizio is innocent. That Giletti was certainly not lacking in courage: finding himself within a few yards of the frontier, he suddenly felt the temptation to rid himself of an attractive rival."

The Duchessa paused for a long time to consider whether it were possible to believe in Fabrizio's guilt, not that she felt that it would have been a very grave sin in a gentleman of her nephew's rank to rid himself of the impertinence of a mummer; but, in her despair, she was beginning to feel vaguely that she would be obliged to fight to prove Fabrizio's innocence. "No," she told herself finally, "here is a decisive proof: he is like poor Pietranera, he always has all his pockets stuffed with weapons, and that day he was carrying only a wretched singled-barrelled gun, and even that he had borrowed from one of the workmen.

"I hate the Prince because he has betrayed me, and betrayed me in the most dastardly fashion; after his written pardon, he had the poor boy seized at Bologna, and all that. But I shall settle that account." About five o'clock in the morning, the Duchessa, crushed by this prolonged fit of despair, rang for her women; who screamed. Seeing her on her bed, fully dressed, with her diamonds, pale as the sheet on which she lay and with closed eyes, it seemed to them as though they beheld her laid out in state after death. They would have supposed that she had

completely lost consciousness had they not remembered that she had just rung for them. A few rare tears trickled from time to time down her insentient cheeks; her women gathered from a sign which she made that she wished to be put to bed.

Twice that evening after the party at the Minister Zurla's, the Conte had called on the Duchessa; being refused admittance, he wrote to her that he wished to ask her advice as to his conduct. Ought he to retain his post after the insult that they had dared to offer him? The Conte went on to say: "The young man is innocent; but, were he guilty, ought they to arrest him without first informing me, his acknowledged protector?" The Duchessa did not see this letter until the following day.

The Conte had no virtue; one may indeed add that what the Liberals understand by *virtue* (seeking the greatest happiness of the greatest number) seemed to him silly; he believed himself bound to seek first and foremost the happiness of Conte Mosca della Rovere; but he was entirely honourable, and perfectly sincere when he spoke of his resignation. Never in his life had he told the Duchessa a lie; she, as it happened, did not pay the slightest attention to this letter; her attitude, and a very painful attitude it was, had been adopted: *to pretend to forget Fabrizio;* after that effort, nothing else mattered to her.

Next day, about noon, the Conte, who had called ten times at the *palazzo* Sanseverina, was at length admitted; he was appalled when he saw the Duchessa. . . . "She looks forty!" he said to himself; "and yesterday she was so brilliant, so young! . . . Everyone tells me that, during her long conversation with Clelia Conti, she looked every bit as young and far more attractive."

The Duchessa's voice, her tone were as strange as her personal appearance. This tone, divested of all passion,

of all human interest, of all anger, turned the Conte pale; it reminded him of the manner of a friend of his who, a few months earlier, when on the point of death, and after receiving the Last Sacrament, had sent for him to talk to him.

After some minutes the Duchessa was able to speak to him. She looked at him, and her eyes remained dead.

"Let us part, my dear Conte," she said to him in a faint but quite articulate voice which she tried to make sound friendly; "let us part, we must! Heaven is my witness that, for five years, my behaviour towards you has been irreproachable. You have given me a brilliant existence, in place of the boredom which would have been my sad portion at the castle of Grianta; without you I should have reached old age several years sooner. . . . For my part, my sole occupation has been to try to make you find happiness. It is because I love you that I propose to you this parting *à l'amiable,* as they say in France."

The Conte did not understand; she was obliged to repeat her statement several times. He grew deadly pale, and, flinging himself on his knees by her bedside, said to her all the things that profound astonishment, followed by the keenest despair, can inspire in a man who is passionately in love. At every moment he offered to hand in his resignation and to follow his mistress to some retreat a thousand leagues from Parma.

"You dare to speak to me of departure, and Fabrizio is here!" she at length exclaimed, half rising. But seeing that the sound of Fabrizio's name made a painful impression, she added after a moment's quiet, gently pressing the Conte's hand: "No, dear friend, I am not going to tell you that I have loved you with that passion and those transports which one no longer feels, it seems to me, after thirty, and I am already a long way past that age. They will have told you that I was in love with

Fabrizio, for I know that the rumour has gone round in this *wicked* court." (Her eyes sparkled for the first time in this conversation, as she uttered the word *wicked*.) "I swear to you before God, and upon Fabrizio's life, that never has there passed between him and me the tiniest thing which could not have borne the eye of a third person. Nor shall I say to you that I love him exactly as a sister might; I love him instinctively, so to speak. I love in him his courage, so simple and so perfect that, one may say, he is not aware of it himself; I remember that this sort of admiration began on his return from Waterloo. He was still a boy then, for all his seventeen years; his great anxiety was to know whether he had really been present at the battle, and, if so, whether he could say that he had fought, when he had not marched to the attack of any enemy battery or column. It was during the serious discussions which we used to have together on this important subject that I began to see in him a perfect charm. His great soul revealed itself to me; what sophisticated falsehoods would a well-bred young man, in his place, have flaunted! Well then, if he is not happy I cannot be happy. There, that is a statement which well describes the state of my heart; if it is not the truth it is at any rate all of it that I see." The Conte, encouraged by this tone of frankness and intimacy, tried to kiss her hand; she drew it back with a sort of horror. "The time is past," she said to him; "I am a woman of thirty-seven, I find myself on the threshold of old age, I already feel all its discouragements, and perhaps I have even drawn near to the tomb. That is a terrible moment, by all one hears, and yet it seems to me that I desire it. I feel the worst symptom of old age; my heart is extinguished by this frightful misfortune, I can no longer love. I see in you now, dear Conte, only the shade of someone who was dear to me. I shall say

more, it is gratitude, simply and solely, that makes me speak to you thus."

"What is to become of me," the Conte repeated, "of me who feel that I am attached to you more passionately than in the first days of our friendship, when I saw you at the Scala?"

"Let me confess to you one thing, dear friend, this talk of love bores me, and seems to me indecent. Come," she said, trying to smile, but in vain, "courage! Be the man of spirit, the judicious man, the man of resource in all circumstances. Be with me what you really are in the eyes of strangers, the most able man and the greatest politician that Italy has produced for ages."

The Conte rose, and paced the room in silence for some moments.

"Impossible, dear friend," he said to her at length; "I am rent asunder by the most violent passion, and you ask me to consult my reason. There is no longer any reason for me!"

"Let us not speak of passion, I beg of you," she said in a dry tone; and this was the first time, after two hours of talk, that her voice assumed any expression whatever. The Conte, in despair himself, sought to console her.

"He has betrayed me," she cried without in any way considering the reasons for hope which the Conte was setting before her; "*he* has betrayed me in the most dastardly fashion!" Her deadly pallor ceased for a moment; but, even in this moment of violent excitement, the Conte noticed that she had not the strength to raise her arms.

"Great God! Can it be possible," he thought, "that she is only ill? In that case, though, it would be the beginning of some very serious illness." Then, filled with

uneasiness, he proposed to call in the famous Razori, the leading physician in the place and in the whole of Italy.

"So you wish to give a stranger the pleasure of learning the whole extent of my despair? . . . Is that the counsel of a traitor or of a friend?" And she looked at him with strange eyes.

"It is all over," he said to himself with despair, "she has no longer any love for me! And worse still; she no longer includes me even among the common men of honour.

"I may tell you," the Conte went on, speaking with emphasis, "that I have been anxious above all things to obtain details of the arrest which has thrown us into despair, and the curious thing is that still I know nothing positive; I have had the constables at the nearest station questioned, they saw the prisoner arrive by the Castelnuovo road and received orders to follow his *sediola*. I at once sent off Bruno, whose zeal is as well known to you as his devotion; he has orders to go on from station to station until he finds out where and how Fabrizio was arrested."

On hearing him utter Fabrizio's name, the Duchessa was seized by a slight convulsion.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said to the Conte as soon as she was able to speak; "these details interest me greatly, give me them all, let me have a clear understanding of the smallest circumstances."

"Well, Signora," the Conte went on, assuming a somewhat lighter air in the hope of distracting her a little, "I have a good mind to send a confidential messenger to Bruno and to order him to push on as far as Bologna; it was from there, perhaps, that our young friend was carried off. What is the date of his last letter?"

"Tuesday, five days ago."

"Had it been opened in the post?"

"No trace of any opening. I ought to tell you that it was written on horrible paper; the address is in a woman's hand, and that address bears the name of an old laundress who is related to my maid. The laundress believes that it is something to do with a love affair, and Cecchina refunds her for the carriage of the letters without adding anything further." The Conte, who had adopted quite the tone of a man of business, tried to discover, by questioning the Duchessa, which could have been the day of the abduction from Bologna. He only then perceived, he who had ordinarily so much tact, that this was the right tone to adopt. These details interested the unhappy woman and seemed to distract her a little. If the Conte had not been in love, this simple idea would have occurred to him as soon as he entered the room. The Duchessa sent him away in order that he might without delay dispatch fresh orders to the faithful Bruno. As they were momentarily considering the question whether there had been a sentence passed before the moment at which the Prince signed the note addressed to the Duchessa, the latter with a certain determination seized the opportunity to say to the Conte: "I shall not reproach you in the least for having omitted the words *unjust proceedings* in the letter which you wrote and he signed, it was the courtier's instinct that gripped you by the throat; unconsciously you preferred your master's interest to your friend's. You have placed your actions under my orders, dear Conte, and that for a long time past, but it is not in your power to change your nature; you have great talents for the part of Minister, but you have also the instinct of that trade. The suppression of the word *unjust* was my ruin; but far be it from me to reproach you for it in any

way, it was the fault of your instinct and not of your will.

"Bear in mind," she went on, changing her tone, and with the most imperious air, "that I am by no means unduly afflicted by the abduction of Fabrizio, that I have never had the slightest intention of removing myself from this place, that I am full of respect for the Prince. That is what you have to say, and this is what I, for my part, wish to say to you: 'As I intend to have the entire control of my own behaviour for the future, I wish to part from you *à l'amiable*, that is to say as a good and old friend. Consider that I am sixty, the young woman is dead in me, I can no longer form an exaggerated idea of anything in the world, I can no longer love.' But I should be even more wretched than I am were I to compromise your future. It may enter into my plans to give myself the appearance of having a young lover, and I should not like to see you distressed. I can swear to you by Fabrizio's happiness"—she stopped for half a minute after these words—"that never have I been guilty of any infidelity to you, and that in five whole years. It is a long time," she said; she tried to smile; her pallid cheeks were convulsed, but her lips were unable to part. "I swear to you even that I have never either planned or wished such a thing. Now you understand that, leave me."

The Conte in despair left the *palazzo* Sanseverina: he could see in the Duchessa the deliberately formed intention to part from him, and never had he been so desperately in love. This is one of the points to which I am obliged frequently to revert, because they are improbable outside Italy. Returning home, he dispatched as many as six different people along the road to Castelnuovo and Bologna, and gave them letters. "But that is not all," the unhappy Conte told himself: "the Prince may take

it into his head to have this wretched boy executed, and that in revenge for the tone which the Duchessa adopted with him on the day of that fatal note. I felt that the Duchessa was exceeding a limit beyond which one ought never to go, and it was to compensate for this that I was so incredibly foolish as to suppress the words *unjust proceedings,* the only ones that bound the Sovereign. . . . But bah! Are those people bound by anything in the world? That is no doubt the greatest mistake of my life, I have risked everything that can bring me life's reward: it now remains to compensate for my folly by dint of activity and cunning; but after all, if I can obtain nothing, even by sacrificing a little of my dignity, I leave the man stranded; with his dreams of high politics, with his ideas of making himself Constitutional King of Lombardy, we shall see how he will fill my place. . . . Fabio Conti is nothing but a fool, Rassi's talent reduces itself to having a man legally hanged who is displeasing to Authority."

As soon as he had definitely made up his mind to resign from the Ministry if the rigour shewn Fabrizio went beyond that of simple detention, the Conte said to himself: "If a caprice of that man's vanity, rashly braved, should cost me my happiness, at least I shall have my honour left. . . . By that token, since I am throwing my portfolio to the winds, I may allow myself a hundred actions which, only this morning, would have seemed to be outside the bounds of possibility. For instance, I am going to attempt everything that is humanly feasible to secure Fabrizio's escape. . . . Great God!" exclaimed the Conte, breaking off in his soliloquy and opening his eyes wide as though at the sight of an unexpected happiness, "the Duchessa never said anything to me about an escape; can she have been wanting in sincerity for once in her life, and is the motive of her quarrel only a desire that I

should betray the Prince? Upon my word, no sooner said than done!"

The Conte's eye had recovered all its satirical sublety. "That engaging Fiscal Rassi is paid by his master for all the sentences that disgrace us throughout Europe, but he is not the sort of man to refuse to be paid by me to betray the master's secrets. The animal has a mistress and a confessor, but the mistress is of too vile a sort for me to be able to tackle her, next day she would relate our interview to all the applewomen in the parish." The Conte, revived by this gleam of hope, was by this time on his way to the Cathedral; astonished at the alertness of his gait, he smiled in spite of his grief: "This is what it is," he said, "to be no longer a Minister!" This Cathedral, like many churches in Italy, serves as a passage from one street to another; the Conte saw as he entered one of the Archbishop's Grand Vicars crossing the nave.

"Since I have met you here," he said to him, "will you be so very good as to spare my gout the deadly fatigue of climbing to His Grace the Archbishop's. He would be doing me the greatest favour in the world if he would be so kind as to come down to the sacristy." The Archbishop was delighted by this message, he had a thousand things to say to the Minister on the subject of Fabrizio. But the Minister guessed that these things were no more than fine phrases, and refused to listen to any of them.

"What sort of man is Dugnani, the Vicar of San Paolo?"

"A small mind and a great ambition," replied the Archbishop; "few scruples and extreme poverty, for we too have our vices!"

"Egad, Monsignore," exclaimed the Minister, "you portray like Tacitus"; and he took leave of him, laughing.

No sooner had he returned to his Ministry than he sent for Priore Dugnani.

"You direct the conscience of my excellent friend the Fiscal General Rassi; are you sure he has nothing to tell me?" And, without any further speeeh or ceremony, he dismissed Dugnani.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE Conte regarded himself as out of office. "Let us see, now," he said to himself, "how many horses we shall be able to have after my disgrace, for that is what they will call my resignation." He made a reckoning of his fortune: he had come to the Ministry with 80,000 francs to his name; greatly to his surprise, he found that, all told, his fortune at that moment did not amount to 500,000 francs: "that is an income of 20,000 lire at the most," he said to himself. "I must admit that I am a great simpleton! There is not a citizen in Parma who does not suppose me to have an income of 150,000 lire, and the Prince, in that respect, is more of a cit than any of them. When they see me in the ditch, they will say that I know how to hide my fortune. Egad!" he cried, "if I am still Minister in three months' time, we shall see that fortune doubled." He found in this idea an occasion for writing to the Duchessa, which he seized with avidity, but to bespeak her pardon for a letter, seeing the terms on which they were, he filled this with figures and calculations. "We shall have only 20,000 lire of income," he told her, "to live upon, all three of us, at Naples, Fabrizio, you and myself. Fabrizio and I shall have one saddle-horse between us." The Minister had barely sent off his letter when the Fiscal General Rassi was announced. He received him with a stiffness which bordered on impertinence.

"What, Sir," he said to him, "you seize and carry off from Bologna a conspirator who is under my protection;

what is more, you propose to cut off his head, and you say nothing about it to me! Do you at least know the name of my successor? Is it General Conti, or yourself?"

Rassi was dumbfoundered; he was too little accustomed to good society to know whether the Conte was speaking seriously: he blushed a deep red, mumbled a few scarcely intelligible words; the Conte watched him and enjoyed his embarrassment. Suddenly Rassi pulled himself together and exclaimed, with perfect ease and with the air of Figaro caught red-handed by Almaviva:

"Faith, Signor Conte, I shan't beat about the bush with Your Excellency: what will you give me to answer all your questions as I should those of my confessor?"

"The Cross of San Paolo" (which is the Parmesan Order) "or money, if you can find me an excuse for granting it to you."

"I prefer the Cross of San Paolo, because it ennobles me."

"What, my dear Fiscal, you still pay some regard to our poor nobility?"

"If I were of noble birth," replied Rassi with all the impudence of his trade, "the families of the people I have had hanged would hate me, but they would not feel contempt for me."

"Very well, I will save you from their contempt," said the Conte; "cure me of my ignorance. What do you intend to do with Fabrizio?"

"Faith, the Prince is greatly embarrassed; he is afraid that, seduced by the fine eyes of Armida—forgive my slightly bold language, they are the Sovereign's own words —he is afraid that, seduced by a certain pair of very fine eyes, which have touched him slightly himself, you may leave him stranded, and there is no one but you to handle the question of Lombardy. I will go so far as to say," Rassi went on, lowering his voice, "that there is

a fine opportunity there for you, and one that is well worth the Cross of San Paolo which you are giving me. The Prince would grant you, as a reward from the nation, a fine estate worth 600,000 francs, which he would set apart from his own domains, or a gratuity of 300,000 scudi, if you would agree not to interfere in the affairs of Fabrizio del Dongo, or at any rate not to speak of them to him except in public."

"I expected something better than that," said the Conte; "not to interfere with Fabrizio means quarrelling with the Duchessa."

"There, that is just what the Prince says: the fact is that he is horribly enraged against the Signora Duchessa, this is between ourselves; and he is afraid that, to compensate yourself for the rupture with that charming lady, now that you are a widower, you may ask him for the hand of his cousin, the old Princess Isotta, who is only fifty."

"He has guessed aright," exclaimed the Conte; "our master is the shrewdest man in his States."

Never had the Conte entertained the grotesque idea of marrying this elderly Princess; nothing would less have suited a man whom the ceremonies of the court bored to death.

He began to tap with his snuff-box on the marble of a little table beside his chair. Rassi saw in this gesture of embarrassment the possibility of a fine windfall; his eye gleamed.

"As a favour, Signor Conte," he cried, "if Your Excellency decides to accept this estate of 600,000 francs or the gratuity in money, I beg that he will not choose any other intermediary than myself. I should make an effort," he added, lowering his voice, "to have the gratuity increased, or else to have a forest of some importance added to the land. If Your Excellency would deign to introduce a little gentleness and tact into his manner in

speaking to the Prince of this youngster they've locked up, a Duchy might perhaps be created out of the lands which the nation's gratitude would offer him. I repeat to Your Excellency; the Prince, for the moment, abominates the Duchessa, but he is greatly embarrassed, so much so indeed that I have sometimes thought there must be some secret consideration which he dared not confess to me. Do you know, we may find a gold mine here, I selling you his most intimate secrets, and quite openly, for I am supposed to be your sworn enemy. After all, if he is furious with the Duchessa, he believes also, and so do we all, that you are the one man in the world who can carry through all the secret negotiations with regard to the Milanese. Will Your Excellency permit me to repeat to him textually the Sovereign's words?" said Rassi, growing heated; "there is often a character in the order of the words which no translation can render, and you may be able to see more in them than I see."

"I permit everything," said the Conte, as he went on, with an air of distraction, tapping the marble table with his gold snuff-box; "I permit everything, and I shall be grateful."

"Give me a patent of hereditary nobility independently of the Cross, and I shall be more than satisfied. When I speak of ennoblement to the Prince, he answers: 'A scoundrel like you, noble! I should have to shut up shop next day; nobody in Parma would wish to be ennobled again.' To come back to the business of the Milanese, the Prince said to me not three days ago: 'There is only that rascal to unravel the thread of our intrigues; if I send him away, or if he follows the Duchessa, I may as well abandon the hope of seeing myself one day the Liberal and beloved ruler of all Italy.'"

At this the Conte drew breath. "Fabrizio will not die," he said to himself.

Never in his life had Rassi been able to secure an intimate conversation with the Prime Minister. He was beside himself with joy: he saw himself on the eve of being able to discard the name Rassi, which had become synonymous throughout the country with everything that was base and vile. The lower orders gave the name Rassi to mad dogs; recently more than one soldier had fought a duel because one of his comrades had called him Rassi. Not a week passed, moreover, in which this ill-starred name did not figure in some atrocious sonnet. His son, a young and innocent schoolboy of sixteen, used to be driven out of the *caffè* on the strength of his name. It was the burning memory of all these little perquisites of his office that made him commit an imprudence. "I have an estate," he said to the Conte, drawing his chair closer to the Minister's; "it is called Riva. I should like to be Barone Riva."

"Why not?" said the Minister. Rassi was beside himself.

"Very well, Signor Conte, I shall take the liberty of being indiscreet. I shall venture to guess the object of your desires; you aspire to the hand of the Princess Isotta, and it is a noble ambition. Once you are of the family, you are sheltered from disgrace, you have our man *tied down*. I shall not conceal from you that he has a horror of this marriage with the Princess Isotta. But if your affairs were entrusted to some skilful and *well paid* person, you would be in a position not to despair of success."

"I, my dear Barone, should despair of it; I disavow in advance everything that you can say in my name; but on the day on which that illustrious alliance comes at length to crown my wishes and to give me so exalted a position in the State, I will offer you, myself, 300,000 francs of my own money, or else recommend the Prince

to accord you a mark of his favour which you yourself will prefer to that sum of money."

The reader finds this conversation long: and yet we are sparing him more than half of it; it continued for two hours more. Rassi left the Conte's presence mad with joy; the Conte was left with a great hope of saving Fabrizio, and more than ever determined to hand in his resignation. He found that his credit stood in need of renewal by the succession to power of persons such as Rassi and General Conti; he took an exquisite delight in a possible method which he had just discovered of avenging himself on the Prince: "He may send the Duchessa away," he cried, "but, by gad, he will have to abandon the hope of becoming Constitutional King of Lombardy." (This was an absurd fantasy: the Prince had abundance of brains, but, by dint of dreaming of it, he had fallen madly in love with the idea.)

The Conte could not contain himself for joy as he hurried to the Duchessa's to give her a report of his conversation with the Fiscal. He found the door closed to him; the porter scarcely dared admit to him the fact of this order, received from his mistress's own lips. The Conte went sadly back to the ministerial *palazzo;* the rebuff he had just encountered completely eclipsed the joy that his conversation with the Prince's confidant had given him. Having no longer the heart to devote himself to anything, the Conte was wandering gloomily through his picture gallery when, a quarter of an hour later, he received a note which ran as follows:

"Since it is true, dear and good friend, that we are nothing more now than friends, you must come to see me only three times in the week. In a fortnight we shall reduce these visits, always so dear to my heart, to two monthly. If you wish to please me, give

publicity to this apparent rupture; if you wished to pay me back almost all the love that I once felt for you, you would choose a new mistress for yourself. As for myself, I have great plans of dissipation: I intend to go a great deal into society, perhaps I shall even find a man of parts to make me forget my misfortunes. Of course, in your capacity as a friend, the first place in my heart will always be kept for you; but I do not wish, for the future, that my actions should be said to have been dictated by your wisdom; above all, I wish it to be well known that I have lost all my influence over your decisions. In a word, dear Conte, be assured that you will always be my dearest friend, but never anything else. Do not, I beg you, entertain any idea of a resumption, it is all over. Count, always, upon my friendship."

This last stroke was too much for the Conte's courage: he wrote a fine letter to the Prince resigning all his offices, and addressed it to the Duchessa with a request that she would forward it to the Palace. A moment later, he received his resignation, torn across, and on one of the blank scraps of the paper the Duchessa had condescended to write: *"No, a thousand times no!"*

It would be difficult to describe the despair of the poor Minister. "She is right, I quite agree," he kept saying to himself at every moment; "my omission of the words *unjust proceedings* is a dreadful misfortune; it will involve perhaps the death of Fabrizio, and that will lead to my own." It was with death in his heart that the Conte, who did not wish to appear at the Sovereign's Palace before being summoned there, wrote out with his own hand the *motu proprio* which created Rassi Cavaliere of the Order of San Paolo and conferred on him hereditary nobility; the Conte appended to it a report of half a page which

set forth to the Prince the reasons of state which made this measure advisable. He found a sort of melancholy joy in making a fair copy of each of these documents, which he addressed to the Duchessa.

He lost himself in suppositions; he tried to guess what, for the future, would be the plan of conduct of the woman he loved. "She has no idea herself," he said to himself; "one thing alone remains certain, which is that she would not for anything in the world fail to adhere to any resolution once she had announced it to me." What added still further to his unhappiness was that he could not succeed in finding that the Duchessa was to be blamed. "She has shewn me a favour in loving me; she ceases to love me after a mistake, unintentional, it is true, but one that may involve a horrible consequence; I have no right to complain." Next morning, the Conte learned that the Duchessa had begun to go into society again; she had appeared the evening before in all the houses in which parties were being given. What would have happened if they had met in the same drawing-room? How was he to speak to her? In what tone was he to address her? And how could he not speak to her?

The day that followed was a day of gloom; the rumour had gone abroad everywhere that Fabrizio was going to be put to death, the town was stirred. It was added that the Prince, having regard for his high birth, had deigned to decide that he should have his head cut off.

"It is I that am killing him," the Conte said to himself; "I can no longer aspire to see the Duchessa ever again." In spite of this fairly obvious conclusion, he could not restrain himself from going three times to her door; as a matter of fact, in order not to be noticed, he went to her house on foot. In his despair, he had even the courage to write to her. He had sent for Rassi twice; the Fiscal

had not shewn his face. "The scoundrel is playing me false," the Conte said to himself.

The day after this, three great pieces of news excited the high society of Parma, and even the middle classes. The execution of Fabrizio was more certain than ever; and, a highly strange complement to this news, the Duchessa did not appear to be at all despairing. To all appearance, she bestowed only a quite moderate regret on her young lover; in any event, she made the most, with an unbounded art, of the pallor which was the legacy of a really serious indisposition, which had come to her at the time of Fabrizio's arrest. The middle classes saw clearly in these details the hard heart of a great lady of the court. In decency, however, and as a sacrifice to the shade of the young Fabrizio, she had broken with Conte Mosca. "What immorality!" exclaimed the Jansenists of Parma. But already the Duchessa, and this was incredible, seemed disposed to listen to the flatteries of the handsomest young men at court. It was observed, among other curious incidents, that she had been very gay in a conversation with Conte Baldi, the Raversi's reigning lover, and had teased him greatly over his frequent visits to the *castello* of Velleja. The lower middle class and the populace were indignant at the death of Fabrizio, which these good folk put down to the jealousy of Conte Mosca. The society of the court was also greatly taken up with the Conte, but only to laugh at him. The third of the great pieces of news to which we have referred was indeed nothing else than the Conte's resignation; everyone laughed at a ridiculous lover who, at the age of fifty-six, was sacrificing a magnificent position to his grief at being abandoned by a heartless woman, who moreover had long ago shewn her preference for a young man. The Archbishop alone had the intelligence or rather the heart to divine that honour forbade the Conte to remain Prime Minister in a

country where they were going to cut off the head, and without consulting him, of a young man who was under his protection. The news of the Conte's resignation had the effect of curing General Fabio Conti of his gout, as we shall relate in due course, when we come to speak of the way in which poor Fabrizio was spending his time in the citadel, while the whole town was inquiring the hour of his execution.

On the following day the Conte saw Bruno, that faithful agent whom he had dispatched to Bologna: the Conte's heart melted at the moment when this man entered his cabinet; the sight of him recalled the happy state in which he had been when he sent him to Bologna, almost in concert with the Duchessa. Bruno came from Bologna where he had discovered nothing; he had not been able to find Lodovico, whom the *podestà* of Castelnuovo had kept locked up in his village prison.

"I am going to send you to Bologna," said the Conte to Bruno; "the Duchessa wishes to give herself the melancholy pleasure of knowing the details of Fabrizio's disaster. Report yourself to the *brigadiere* of police in charge of the station at Castelnuovo. . . .

"No!" exclaimed the Conte, breaking off in his orders; "start at once for Lombardy, and distribute money lavishly among all our correspondents. My object is to obtain from all these people reports of the most encouraging nature." Bruno, after clearly grasping the object of his mission, set to work to write his letters of credit. As the Conte was giving him his final instructions, he received a letter which was entirely false, but extremely well written; one would have called it the letter of a friend writing to a friend to ask a favour of him. The friend who wrote it was none other than the Prince. Having heard mention of some idea of resignation, he besought his friend, Conte Mosca, to retain his office; he asked him

this in the name of their friendship and of the *dangers that threatened the country,* and ordered him as his master. He added that, the King of —— having placed at his disposal two Cordons of his Order, he was keeping one for himself and was sending the other to his dear Conte Mosca.

"That animal is ruining me!" cried the Conte in a fury, before the astonished Bruno, "and he thinks to win me over by those same hypocritical phrases which we have planned together so many times to lime the twig for some fool." He declined the Order that was offered him, and in his reply spoke of the state of his health as allowing him but little hope of being able to carry on for much longer the arduous duties of the Ministry. The Conte was furious. A moment later was announced the Fiscal Rassi, whom he treated like a black.

"Well! Because I have made you noble, you are beginning to shew insolence! Why did you not come yesterday to thank me, as was your bounden duty, Master Drudge?"

Rassi was a long way below the reach of insult; it was in this tone that he was daily received by the Prince; but he was anxious to be a Barone, and justified himself with spirit. Nothing was easier.

"The Prince kept me glued to a table all day yesterday; I could not leave the Palace. His Highness made me copy out in my wretched attorney's script a number of diplomatic papers so stupid and so long-winded that I really believe his sole object was to keep me prisoner. When I was finally able to take my leave of him, about five o'clock, half dead with hunger, he gave me the order to go straight home and not to go out in the evening. As a matter of fact, I saw two of his private spies, well known to me, patrolling my street until nearly midnight. This morning, as soon as I could, I sent for a carriage

which took me to the door of the Cathedral. I got down from the carriage very slowly, then at a quick pace walked through the church, and here I am. Your Excellency is at this moment the one man in the world whom I am most passionately anxious to please."

"And I, Master Joker, am not in the least taken in by all these more or less well constructed stories. You refused to speak to me about Fabrizio the day before yesterday; I respected your scruples and your oaths of secrecy, although oaths, to a creature like you, are at the most means of evasion. To-day, I require the truth. What are these ridiculous rumours which make out that this young man is sentenced to death as the murderer of the comedian Giletti?"

"No one can give Your Excellency a better account of those rumours, for it was I myself who started them by the Sovereign's orders; and, I believe, it was perhaps to prevent me from informing you of this incident that he kept me prisoner all day yesterday. The Prince, who does not take me for a fool, could have no doubt that I should come to you with my Cross and ask you to fasten it in my buttonhole."

"To the point!" cried the Minister. "And no fine speeches."

"No doubt, the Prince would be glad to pass sentence of death on Signor del Dongo, but he has been sentenced, as you probably know, only to twenty years in irons, commuted by the Prince, on the very day after the sentence, to twelve years in a fortress, with fasting on bread and water every Friday and other religious observances."

"It is because I knew of this sentence to imprisonment only that I was alarmed by the rumours of immediate execution which are going about the town; I remember the death of Conte Palanza, which was such a clever trick on your part."

"It was then that I ought to have had the Cross!" cried Rassi, in no way disconcerted; "I ought to have forced him when I held him in my hand, and the man wished the prisoner killed. I was a fool then; and it is armed with that experience that I venture to advise you not to copy my example to-day." (This comparison seemed in the worst of taste to his hearer, who was obliged to restrain himself forcibly from kicking Rassi.)

"In the first place," the latter went on with the logic of a trained lawyer and the perfect assurance of a man whom no insult could offend, "in the first place there can be no question of the execution of the said del Dongo; the Prince would not dare, the times have altogether changed! Besides, I, who am noble and hope through you to become Barone, would not lend a hand in the matter. Now it is only from me, as Your Excellency knows, that the executioner of supreme penalties can receive orders, and, I swear to you, Cavaliere Rassi will never issue any such orders against Signor del Dongo."

"And you will be acting wisely," said the Conte with a severe air, taking his adversary's measure.

"Let us make a distinction," went on Rassi, smiling. "I myself figure only in the official death-roll, and if Signor del Dongo happens to die of a colic, do not go and put it down to me. The Prince is vexed, and I do not know why, with the Sanseverina." (Three days earlier Rassi would have said "the Duchessa," but, like everyone in the town, he knew of her breach with the Prime Minister.) The Conte was struck by the omission of her title on such lips, and the reader may judge of the pleasure that it afforded him; he darted at Rassi a glance charged with the keenest hatred. "My dear angel," he then said to himself, "I can shew you my love only by blind obedience to your orders.

"I must admit," he said to the Fiscal, "that I do not take

any very passionate interest in the various caprices of the Signora Duchessa; only, since it was she who introduced to me this scapegrace of a Fabrizio, who would have done well to remain at Naples and not come here to complicate our affairs, I make a point of his not being put to death in my time, and I am quite ready to give you my word that you shall be Barone in the week following his release from prison."

"In that case, Signor Conte, I shall not be Barone for twelve whole years, for the Prince is furious, and his hatred of the Duchessa is so keen that he is trying to conceal it."

"His Highness is too good; what need has he to conceal his hatred, since his Prime Minister is no longer protecting the Duchessa? Only I do not wish that anyone should be able to accuse me of meanness, nor above all of jealousy: it was I who made the Duchessa come to this country, and if Fabrizio dies in prison you will not be Barone, but you will perhaps be stabbed with a dagger. But let us not talk about this trifle: the fact is that I have made an estimate of my fortune, at the most I may be able to put together an income of twenty thousand lire, on which I propose to offer my resignation, most humbly, to the Sovereign. I have some hope of finding employment with the King of Naples; that big town will offer me certain distractions which I need at this moment and which I cannot find in a hole like Parma; I should stay here only in the event of your obtaining for me the hand of the Princess Isotta," and so forth. The conversation on this subject was endless. As Rassi was rising to leave, the Conte said to him with an air of complete indifference:

"You know that people have said that Fabrizio was playing me false, in the sense that he was one of the Duchessa's lovers; I decline to accept that rumour, and,

to give it the lie, I wish you to have this purse conveyed to Fabrizio."

"But, Signor Conte," said Rassi in alarm, looking at the purse, "there is an enormous sum here, and the regulations. . . ."

"To you, my dear Sir, it may be enormous," replied the Conte with an air of the most supreme contempt: "a cit like you, sending money to his friend in prison, thinks he is ruining himself if he gives him ten sequins; I, on the other hand, *wish* Fabrizio to receive these six thousand francs, and on no account is the Castle to know anything of the matter."

While the terrified Rassi was trying to answer, the Conte shut the door on him with impatience. "Those fellows," he said to himself, "cannot see power unless it is cloaked in insolence." So saying, this great Minister abandoned himself to an action so ridiculous that we have some misgivings about recording it. He ran to take from his desk a portrait in miniature of the Duchessa, and covered it with passionate kisses. "Forgive me, my dear angel," he cried, "if I did not fling out of the window with my own hands that drudge who dares to speak of you in a tone of familiarity; but, if I am acting with this excess of patience, it is to obey you! And he will lose nothing by waiting."

After a long conversation with the portrait, the Conte, who felt his heart dead in his breast, had the idea of an absurd action, and dashed into it with the eagerness of a child. He sent for a coat on which his decorations were sewn and went to pay a call on the elderly Princess Isotta. Never in his life had he gone to her apartments, except on New Year's Day. He found her surrounded by a number of dogs, and tricked out in all her finery, including diamonds even, as though she were going to court. The Conte having shewn some fear lest he might be up-

setting the arrangements of Her Highness, who was probably going out, the lady replied that a Princess of Parma owed it to herself to be always in such array. For the first time since his disaster the Conte felt an impulse of gaiety. "I have done well to appear here," he told himself, "and this very day I must make my declaration." The Princess had been delighted to receive a visit from a man so renowned for his wit, and a Prime Minister; the poor old maid was hardly accustomed to such visitors. The Conte began by an adroit preamble, relative to the immense distance that must always separate from a plain gentleman the members of a reigning family.

"One must draw a distinction," said the Princess: "the daughter of a King of France, for instance, has no hope of ever succeeding to the Throne; but things are not like that in the House of Parma. And that is why we Farnese must always keep up a certain dignity in externals; and I, a poor Princess such as you see me now, I cannot say that it is absolutely impossible that one day you may be my Prime Minister."

This idea, by its fantastic unexpectedness, gave the poor Conte a second momentary thrill of perfect gaiety.

On leaving the apartments of the Princess Isotta, who had blushed deeply on receiving the avowal of the Prime Minister's passion, he met one of the grooms from the Palace: the Prince had sent for him in hot haste.

"I am unwell," replied the Minister, delighted at being able to play a trick on his Prince. "Oh! Oh! You drive me to extremes," he exclaimed in a fury, "and then you expect me to serve you; but learn this, my Prince, that to have received power from Providence is no longer enough in these times: it requires great brains and a strong character to succeed in being a despot."

After dismissing the groom from the Palace, highly scandalised by the perfect health of this invalid, the Conte

amused himself by going to see the two men at court who had the greatest influence over General Fabio Conti. The one thing that made the Minister shudder and robbed him of all his courage was that the governor of the citadel was accused of having once before made away with a captain, his personal enemy, by means of the *acquetta di Perugia.*

The Conte knew that during the last week the Duchessa had been squandering vast sums with a view to establishing communications with the citadel; but, in his opinion, there was small hope of success; all eyes were still too wide open. We shall not relate to the reader all the attempts at corruption made by this unhappy woman: she was in despair, and agents of every sort, all perfectly devoted, were supporting her. But there is perhaps only one kind of business which is done to perfection in small despotic courts, namely the custody of political prisoners. The Duchessa's gold had no other effect than to secure the dismissal from the citadel of nine or ten men of all ranks.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THUS, with an entire devotion to the prisoner, the Duchessa and the Prime Minister had been able to do but very little for him. The Prince was in a rage, the court as well as the public were *piqued* by Fabrizio, delighted to see him come to grief: he had been too fortunate. In spite of the gold which she spent in handfuls, the Duchessa had not succeded in advancing an inch in her siege of the citadel; not a day passed but the Marchesa Raversi or Cavaliere Riscara had some fresh report to communicate to General Fabio Conti. They were supporting his weakness.

As we have already said, on the day of his imprisonment, Fabrizio was taken first of all to the *governor's palazzo.* This was a neat little building erected in the eighteenth century from the plans of Vanvitelli, who placed it one hundred and eighty feet above the ground, on the platform of the huge round tower. From the windows of this little *palazzo,* isolated on the back of the enormous tower like a camel's hump, Fabrizio could make out the country and the Alps to a great distance; he followed with his eye beneath the citadel the course of the Parma, a sort of torrent which, turning to the right four leagues from the town, empties its waters into the Po. Beyond the left bank of this river, which formed so to speak a series of huge white patches in the midst of the green fields, his enraptured eye caught distinctly each of the summits of the immense wall with which the Alps enclose Italy to the north. These summits, always covered in snow, even in

the month of August which it then was, give one as it were a reminder of coolness in the midst of these scorching plains; the eye can follow them in the minutest detail, and yet they are more than thirty leagues from the citadel of Parma. This expansive view from the governor's charming *palazzo* is broken at one corner towards the south by the *Torre Farnese,* in which a room was being hastily prepared for Fabrizio. This second tower, as the reader may perhaps remember, was built on the platform of the great tower in honour of a Crown Prince who, unlike Hippolytus the son of Theseus, had by no means repelled the advances of a young stepmother. The Princess died in a few hours; the Prince's son regained his liberty only seventeen years later, when he ascended the throne on the death of his father. This Torre Farnese to which, after waiting for three quarters of an hour, Fabrizio was made to climb, of an extremely plain exterior, rises some fifty feet above the platform of the great tower, and is adorned with a number of lightning conductors. The Prince who, in his displeasure with his wife, built this prison visible from all parts of the country, had the singular design of trying to persuade his subjects that it had been there for many years: that is why he gave it the name of *Torre Farnese.* It was forbidden to speak of this construction, and from all parts of the town of Parma and the surrounding plains people could perfectly well see the masons laying each of the stones which compose this pentagonal edifice. In order to prove that it was old, there was placed above the door two feet wide and four feet high which forms its entrance a magnificent bas-relief representing Alessandro Farnese, the famous general, forcing Henri IV to withdraw from Paris. This Torre Farnese, standing in so conspicuous a position, consists of a hall on the ground floor, at least forty yards long, broad in proportion and filled with extremely squat pillars, for this disproportionately

large room is not more than fifteen feet high. It is used as the guard-room, and in the middle of it the staircase rises in a spiral round one of the pillars; it is a small staircase of iron, very light, barely two feet in width and wrought in filigree. By this staircase, which shook beneath the weight of the gaolers who were escorting him, Fabrizio came to a set of vast rooms more than twenty feet high, forming a magnificent first floor. They had originally been furnished with the greatest luxury for the young Prince who spent in them the seventeen best years of his life. At one end of this apartment, the new prisoner was shewn a chapel of the greatest magnificence; the walls and ceiling were entirely covered in black marble; pillars, black also and of the noblest proportions, were placed in line along the black walls without touching them, and these walls were decorated with a number of skulls in white marble, of colossal proportions, elegantly carved and supported underneath by crossbones. "There is an invention of the hatred that cannot kill," thought Fabrizio, "and what a devilish idea to let me see it."

An iron staircase of light filigree, similarly coiled about a pillar, gave access to the second floor of this prison, and it was in the rooms of this second floor, which were some fifteen feet in height, that for the last year General Fabio Conti had given proof of his genius. First of all, under his direction, solid bars had been fixed in the windows of these rooms, originally occupied by the Prince's servants, and standing more than thirty feet above the stone slabs which paved the platform of the great round tower. It was by a dark corridor, running along the middle of this building, that one approached these rooms, each of which had two windows; and in this very narrow corridor Fabrizio noticed three iron gates in succession, formed of enormous bars and rising to the roof. It was the plans, sections and elevations of all these pretty inventions that,

for two years past, had entitled the General to an audience of his master every week. A conspirator placed in one of these rooms could not complain to public opinion that he was being treated in an inhuman fashion, and yet was unable to communicate with anyone in the world, or to make a movement without being heard. The General had had placed in each room huge joists of oak in the form of trestles three feet high, and this was his paramount invention, which gave him a claim to the Ministry of Police. On these trestles he had set up a cell of planks, extremely resonant, ten feet high, and touching the wall only at the side where the windows were. On the other three sides ran a little corridor four feet wide, between the original wall of the prison, which consisted of huge blocks of dressed stone, and the wooden partitions of the cell. These partitions, formed of four double planks of walnut, oak and pine, were solidly held together by iron bolts and by innumerable nails.

It was into one of these rooms, constructed a year earlier, and the masterpiece of General Fabio Conti's inventive talent, which had received the sounding title of *Passive Obedience,* that Fabrizio was taken. He ran to the windows. The view that one had from these barred windows was sublime: one little piece of the horizon alone was hidden, to the north-west, by the terraced roof of the governor's *palazzo,* which had only two floors; the ground-floor was occupied by the offices of the staff; and from the first Fabrizio's eyes were attracted to one of the windows of the upper floor, in which were to be seen, in pretty cages, a great number of birds of all sorts. Fabrizio amused himself in listening to their song and in watching them greet the last rays of the setting sun, while the gaolers busied themselves about him. This aviary window was not more than five-and-twenty feet from one of his, and stood

five or six feet lower down, so that his eyes fell on the birds.

There was a moon that evening, and at the moment of Fabrizio's entering his prison it was rising majestically on the horizon to the right, over the chain of the Alps, towards Treviso. It was only half past eight, and, at the other extremity of the horizon, to the west, a brilliant orange-red sunset showed to perfection the outlines of Monviso and the other Alpine peaks which run inland from Nice towards Mont Cenis and Turin. Without a thought of his misfortunes, Fabrizio was moved and enraptured by this sublime spectacle. "So it is in this exquisite world that Clelia Conti dwells; with her pensive and serious nature, she must enjoy this view more than anyone; here it is like being alone in the mountains a hundred leagues from Parma." It was not until he had spent more than two hours at the window, admiring this horizon which spoke to his soul, and often also letting his eyes rest on the governor's charming *palazzo,* that Fabrizio suddenly exclaimed: "But is this really a prison? Is this what I have so greatly dreaded?" Instead of seeing at every turn discomforts and reasons for bitterness, our hero let himself be charmed by the attractions of his prison.

Suddenly his attention was forcibly recalled to reality by a terrifying din: his wooden cell, which was not unlike a cage and moreover was extremely resonant, was violently shaken; the barking of a dog and little shrill cries completed the strangest medley of sounds. "What now! Am I going to escape so soon?" thought Fabrizio. A moment later he was laughing as perhaps no one has ever laughed in a prison. By the General's orders, at the same time as the gaolers there had been sent up an English dog, extremely savage, which was set to guard officers of importance, and was to spend the night in the space so ingeniously contrived all round Fabrizio's cage. The dog and

the gaoler were to sleep in the interval of three feet left between the stone pavement of the original floor and the wooden planks on which the prisoner could not move a step without being heard.

Now, when Fabrizio arrived, the room of the *Passive Obedience* happened to be occupied by a hundred huge rats which took flight in every direction. The dog, a sort of spaniel crossed with an English fox-terrier, was no beauty, but to make up for this shewed a great alertness. He had been tied to the stone pavement beneath the planks of the wooden room; but when he heard the rats pass close by him, he made an effort so extraordinary that he succeeded in pulling his head out of his collar. Then came this splendid battle the din of which aroused Fabrizio, plunged in the least melancholy of dreams. The rats that had managed to escape the first assault of the dog's teeth took refuge in the wooden room, the dog came after them up the six steps which led from the stone floor to Fabrizio's cell. Then began a really terrifying din: the cell was shaken to its foundations. Fabrizio laughed like a madman until the tears ran down his cheeks: the gaoler Grillo, no less amused, had shut the door; the dog, in going after the rats, was not impeded by any furniture, for the room was completely bare; there was nothing to check the bounds of the hunting dog but an iron stove in one corner. When the dog had triumphed over all his enemies, Fabrizio called him, patted him, succeeded in winning his affection. "Should this fellow ever see me jumping over a wall," he said to himself, "he will not bark." But this far-seeing policy was a boast on his part: in the state of mind in which he was, he found his happiness in playing with this dog. By a paradox to which he gave no thought, a secret joy was reigning in the depths of his heart.

After he had made himself quite breathless by running about with the dog:

"What is your name?" Fabrizio asked the gaoler.

"Grillo, to serve Your Excellency in all that is allowed by the regulations."

"Very well, my dear Grillo, a certain Giletti tried to murder me on the broad highway, I defended myself, and killed him; I should kill him again if it had to be done, but I wish to lead a gay life for all that so long as I am your guest. Ask for authority from your chiefs, and go and procure linen for me from the *palazzo* Sanseverina; also, buy me lots of *nebiolo d'Asti.*

This is quite a good sparkling wine which is made in Piedmont, in Alfieri's country, and is highly esteemed, especially by the class of wine-tasters to which gaolers belong. Nine or ten of these gentlemen were engaged in transporting to Fabrizio's wooden room certain pieces of old furniture, highly gilded, which they took from the Prince's apartment on the first floor; all of them bore religiously in mind this recommendation of the wine of Asti. In spite of all they might do, Fabrizio's establishment for this first night was lamentable; but he appeared shocked only by the absence of a bottle of good *nebiolo.* "He seems a good lad," said the gaolers as they left him, "and there is only one thing to be hoped for, that our gentlemen will let him have plenty of money."

When he had recovered a little from all this din and confusion: "Is it possible that this is a prison?" Fabrizio asked himself, gazing at that vast horizon from Treviso to Monviso, the endless chain of the Alps, the peaks covered with snow, the stars, and everything, "and a first night in prison besides. I can conceive that Clelia Conti enjoys this airy solitude; here one is a thousand leagues above the pettinesses and wickednesses which occupy us down there. If those birds which are under my window there belong to her, I shall see her. . . . Will she blush when she catches sight of me?" It was while debating this important ques-

tion that our hero, at a late hour of the night, fell asleep.

On the day following this night, the first spent in prison, in the course of which he never once lost his patience, Fabrizio was reduced to making conversation with Fox, the English dog; Grillo the gaoler did indeed greet him always with the friendliest expression, but a new order made him dumb, and he brought neither linen nor *nebiolo*.

"Shall I see Clelia?" Fabrizio asked himself as he awoke. "But are those birds hers?" The birds were beginning to utter little chirps and to sing, and at that height this was the only sound that was carried on the air. It was a sensation full of novelty and pleasure for Fabrizio, the vast silence which reigned at this height; he listened with rapture to the little chirpings, broken and so shrill, with which his neighbours the birds were greeting the day. "If they belong to her, she will appear for a moment in that room, there, beneath my window," and, while he examined the immense chains of the Alps, against the first foothills of which the citadel of Parma seemed to rise like an advanced redoubt, his eyes returned every moment to the sumptuous cages of lemon-wood and mahogany, which, adorned with gilt wires, filled the bright room which served as an aviary. What Fabrizio did not learn until later was that this room was the only one on the second floor of the *palazzo* which had any shade, between eleven o'clock and four: it was sheltered by the Torre Farnese.

"What will be my dismay," thought Fabrizio, "if, instead of those modest and pensive features for which I am waiting, and which will blush slightly perhaps if she catches sight of me, I see appear the coarse face of some thoroughly common maid, charged with the duty of looking after the birds! But if I do see Clelia, will she deign to notice me? Upon my soul, I must commit some indiscretion so as to be noticed; my position should have some privi-

leges; besides, we are both alone here, and so far from the world! I am a prisoner, evidently what General Conti and the other wretches of his sort call one of their subordinates. . . . But she has so much intelligence, or, I should say, so much heart, so the Conte supposes, that possibly, by what he says, she despises her father's profession; which would account for her melancholy. A noble cause of sadness! But, after all, I am not exactly a stranger to her. With what grace, full of modesty, she greeted me yesterday evening! I remember quite well how, when we met near Como, I said to her: 'One day I shall come to see your beautiful pictures at Parma; will you remember this name: Fabrizio del Dongo?' Will she have forgotten it? She was so young then!

"But by the way," Fabrizio said to himself in astonishment, suddenly interrupting the current of his thoughts, "I am forgetting to be angry. Can I be one of those stout hearts of which antiquity has furnished the world with several examples? How is this, I who was so much afraid of prison, I am in prison, and I do not even remember to be sad! It is certainly a case where the fear was a hundred times worse than the evil. What! I have to convince myself before I can be distressed by this prison, which, as Blanès says, may as easily last ten years as ten months! Can it be the surprise of all these novel surroundings that is distracting me from the grief that I ought to feel? Perhaps this good humour which is independent of my will and not very reasonable will cease all of a sudden, perhaps in an instant I shall fall into the black misery which I ought to be feeling.

"In any case, it is indeed surprising to be in prison and to have to reason with oneself in order to be unhappy. Upon my soul, I come back to my theory, perhaps I have a great character."

Fabrizio's meditations were disturbed by the carpenter

of the citadel, who came to take the measurements of a screen for his windows; it was the first time that this prison had been used, and they had forgotten to complete it in this essential detail.

"And so," thought Fabrizio, "I am going to be deprived of that sublime view." And he sought to derive sadness from this privation.

"But what's this?" he cried suddenly, addressing the carpenter. "Am I not to see those pretty birds any more?"

"Ah, the Signorina's birds, that she's so fond of," said the man, with a good-natured air, "hidden, eclipsed, blotted out like everything else."

Conversation was forbidden the carpenter just as strictly as it was the gaolers, but the man felt pity for the prisoner's youth: he informed him that these enormous shutters, resting on the sills of the two windows, and slanting upwards and away from the wall, were intended to leave the inmates with no view save of the sky. "It is done for their morals," he told him, "to increase a wholesome sadness and the desire to amend their ways in the hearts of the prisoners; the General," the carpenter added, "has also had the idea of taking the glass out of their windows and putting oiled paper there instead."

Fabrizio greatly enjoyed the epigrammatic turn of this conversation, extremely rare in Italy.

"I should very much like to have a bird to cheer me, I am madly fond of them; buy me one from Signorina Clelia Conti's maid."

"What, do you know her," cried the carpenter, "that you say her name so easily?"

"Who has not heard tell of so famous a beauty? But I have had the honour of meeting her several times at court."

"The poor young lady is very dull here," the carpenter went on; "she spends all her time there with her birds.

This morning she sent out to buy some fine orange trees which they have placed by her orders at the door of the tower, under your window: if it weren't for the cornice, you would be able to see them." There were in this speech words that were very precious to Fabrizio; he found a tactful way of giving the carpenter money.

"I am breaking two rules at the same time," the man told him; "I am talking to Your Excellency and taking money. The day after to-morrow, when I come back with the shutters, I shall have a bird in my pocket, and if I am not alone, I shall pretend to let it escape; if I can, I shall bring you a prayer book: you must suffer by not being able to say your office."

"And so," Fabrizio said to himself as soon as he was alone, "those birds are hers, but in two days more I shall no longer see them." At this thought his eyes became tinged with regret. But finally, to his inexpressible joy, after so long a wait and so much anxious gazing, towards midday Clelia came to attend to her birds. Fabrizio remained motionless, and did not breathe; he was standing against the enormous bars of his window and pressed close to them. He observed that she did not raise her eyes to himself; but her movements had an air of embarrassment, like those of a person who knows that she is being overlooked. Had she wished to do so, the poor girl could not have forgotten the delicate smile she had seen hovering over the prisoner's lips the day before, when the constables brought him out of the guard-room.

Although to all appearance she was paying the most careful attention to what she was doing, at the moment when she approached the window of the aviary she blushed quite perceptibly. The first thought in Fabrizio's mind, as he stood glued to the iron bars of his window, was to indulge in the childish trick of tapping a little with his hand on those bars, and so making a slight noise; then

the mere idea of such a want of delicacy horrified him. "It would serve me right if for the next week she sent her maid to look after the birds." This delicate thought would never have occurred to him at Naples or at Novara.

He followed her eagerly with his eyes: "Obviously," he said to himself, "she is going to leave the room without deigning to cast a glance at this poor window, and yet she is just opposite me." But, on turning back from the farther end of the room, which Fabrizio, thanks to his greater elevation, could see quite plainly, Clelia could not help looking furtively up at him, as she approached, and this was quite enough to make Fabrizio think himself authorised to salute her. "Are we not alone in the world here?" he asked himself, to give himself the courage to do so. At this salute the girl stood still and lowered her eyes; then Fabrizio saw her raise them very slowly; and, evidently making an effort to control herself, she greeted the prisoner with the most grave and *distant* gesture; but she could not impose silence on her eyes: without her knowing it, probably, they expressed for a moment the keenest pity. Fabrizio remarked that she blushed so deeply that the rosy tinge ran swiftly down to her shoulders, from which the heat had made her cast off, when she came to the aviary, a shawl of black lace. The unconscious stare with which Fabrizio replied to her glance doubled the girl's discomposure. "How happy that poor woman would be," she said to herself, thinking of the Duchessa, "if for a moment only she could see him as I see him now."

Fabrizio had had some slight hope of saluting her again as she left the room; but to avoid this further courtesy Clelia beat a skilful retreat by stages, from cage to cage, as if, at the end of her task, she had to attend to the birds nearest the door. At length she went out; Fabrizio stood motionless gazing at the door through which she had disappeared; he was another man.

From that moment the sole object of his thoughts was to discover how he might manage to continue to see her, even when they had set up that horrible screen outside the window that overlooked the governor's *palazzo*.

Overnight, before going to bed, he had set himself the long and tedious task of hiding the greater part of the gold that he had in several of the rat-holes which adorned his wooden cell. "This evening, I must hide my watch. Have I not heard it said that with patience and a watch-spring with a jagged edge one can cut through wood and even iron? So I shall be able to saw through this screen. The work of concealing his watch, which occupied him for hours, did not seem to him at all long; he was thinking of the different ways of attaining his object and of what he himself could do in the way of carpentering. "If I get to work the right way," he said to himself, "I shall be able to cut a section clean out of the oak plank which will form the screen, at the end which will be resting on the window-sill; I can take this piece out and put it back according to circumstances; I shall give everything I possess to Grillo, so that he may be kind enough not to notice this little device." All Fabrizio's happiness was now involved in the possibility of carrying out this task, and he could think of nothing else. "If I can only manage to see her, I am a happy man. . . . No," he reminded himself, "she must also see that I see her." All night long his head was filled with devices of carpentering, and perhaps never gave a single thought to the court of Parma, the Prince's anger, etc., etc. We must admit that he did not think either of the grief in which the Duchessa must be plunged. He waited impatiently for the morrow; but the carpenter did not appear again: evidently he was regarded in the prison as a Liberal. They took care to send another, a sour-faced fellow who made no reply except a growl that boded ill to all the pleasant words with which

Fabrizio sought to cajole him. Some of the Duchessa's many attempts to open a correspondence with Fabrizio had been discovered by the Marchesa Raversi's many agents, and, by her, General Fabio Conti was daily warned, frightened, put on his mettle. Every eight hours six soldiers of the guard relieved the previous six in the great hall with the hundred pillars on the ground floor: in addition to these, the governor posted a gaoler on guard at each of the three successive iron gates of the corridor, and poor Grillo, the only one who saw the prisoner, was condemned to leave the Torre Farnese only once a week, at which he showed great annoyance. He made his ill humour felt by Fabrizio, who had the sense to reply only in these words: "Plenty of good *nebiolo d'Asti,* my friend." And he gave him money.

"Well now, even this, which consoles us in all our troubles," exclaimed the indignant Grillo, in a voice barely loud enough to be heard by the prisoner, "we are forbidden to take, and I ought to refuse it, but I accept; however, it's money thrown away; I can tell you nothing about anything. Go on, you must be a rare bad lot, the whole citadel is upside down because of you; the Signora Duchessa's fine goings on have got three of us dismissed already."

"Will the screen be ready before midday?" This was the great question which made Fabrizio's heart throb throughout that long morning; he counted each quarter as it sounded from the citadel clock. Finally, when the last quarter before noon struck, the screen had not yet arrived; Clelia reappeared and looked after her birds. Cruel necessity had made Fabrizio's daring take such strides, and the risk of not seeing her again seemed to him so to transcend all others that he ventured, looking at Clelia, to make with his finger the gesture of sawing through the screen;

it is true that as soon as she had perceived this gesture, so seditious in prison, she half bowed and withdrew.

"How now!" thought Fabrizio in amazement, "can she be so unreasonable as to see an absurd familiarity in a gesture dictated by the most imperious necessity? I meant to request her always to deign, when she is attending to her birds, to look now and again at the prison window, even when she finds it masked by an enormous wooden shutter; I meant to indicate to her that I shall do everything that is humanly possible to contrive to see her. Great God! Does this mean that she will not come tomorrow owing to that indiscreet gesture?" This fear, which troubled Fabrizio's sleep, was entirely justified; on the following day Clelia had not appeared at three o'clock, when the workmen finished installing outside Fabrizio's windows the two enormous screens; they had been hauled up piecemeal, from the terrace of the great tower, by means of ropes and pulleys attached to the iron bars outside the windows. It is true that, hidden behind a shutter in her own room, Clelia had followed with anguish every movement of the workmen; she had seen quite plainly Fabrizio's mortal anxiety, but had nevertheless had the courage to keep the promise she had made to herself.

Clelia was a little devotee of Liberalism; in her girlhood she had taken seriously all the Liberal utterances which she had heard in the company of her father, who thought only of establishing his own position; from this she had come to feel a contempt, almost a horror for the flexible character of the courtier; whence her antipathy to marriage. Since Fabrizio's arrival, she had been racked by remorse: "And so," she said to herself, "my unworthy heart is taking the side of the people who seek to betray my father! He dares to make me the sign of sawing through a door! . . . But," she at once went on with anguish in her heart, "the whole town is talking of his approaching death! To-

morrow may be the fatal day! With the monsters who govern us, what in the world is not possible? What meekness, what heroic serenity in those eyes, which perhaps are about to close for ever! God! What must be the Duchessa's anguish! They say that she is in a state of utter despair. If I were she, I would go and stab the Prince, like the heroic Charlotte Corday."

Throughout this third day of his imprisonment, Fabrizio was wild with anger, but solely at not having seen Clelia appear. "Anger for anger, I ought to have told her that I loved her," he cried; for he had arrived at this discovery. "No, it is not at all from greatness of heart that I am not thinking about prison, and am making Blanès's prophecy prove false: such honour is not mine. In spite of myself I think of that look of sweet pity which Clelia let fall on me when the constables led me out of the guard-room; that look has wiped out all my past life. Who would have said that I should find such sweet eyes in such a place, and at the moment when my own sight was offended by the faces of Barbone and the General-governor. Heaven appeared to me in the midst of those vile creatures. And how can one help loving beauty and seeking to see it again? No, it is certainly not greatness of heart that makes me indifferent to all the little vexations which prison heaps upon me." Fabrizio's imagination, passing rapidly over every possibility in turn, arrived at that of his being set at liberty. "No doubt the Duchessa's friendship will do wonders for me. Well, I shall thank her for my liberty only with my lips; this is not at all the sort of place to which one returns! Once out of prison, separated as we are socially, I should practically never see Clelia again! And, after all, what harm is prison doing me? If Clelia deigned not to crush me with her anger, what more should I have to ask of heaven?"

On the evening of this day on which he had not seen

his pretty neighbour, he had a great idea: with the iron cross of the rosary which is given to every prisoner on his admission to prison, he began, and with success, to bore a hole in the shutter. "It is perhaps an imprudence," he told himself before he began. "Did not the carpenters say in front of me that the painters would be coming to-morrow in their place? What will they say if they find the shutter with a hole in it? But if I do not commit this imprudence, to-morrow I shall not be able to see her. What! By my own inactivity am I to remain for a day without seeing her, and that after she has turned from me in an ill humour?" Fabrizio's imprudence was rewarded; after fifteen hours of work he saw Clelia, and, to complete his happiness, as she had no idea that he was looking at her, she stood for a long time without moving, her gaze fixed on the huge screen; he had plenty of time to read in her eyes the signs of the most tender pity. Towards the end of the visit, she was even quite evidently neglecting her duty to her birds, to stay for whole minutes gazing at the window. Her heart was profoundly troubled; she was thinking of the Duchessa, whose extreme misfortune had inspired in her so much pity, and at the same time she was beginning to hate her. She understood nothing of the profound melancholy which had taken hold of her character, she felt out of temper with herself. Two or three times, in the course of this encounter, Fabrizio was impatient to try to shake the screen; he felt that he was not happy so long as he could not indicate to Clelia that he saw her. "However," he told himself, "if she knew that I could see her so easily, timid and reserved as she is, she would probably slip away out of my sight."

He was far more happy next day (out of what miseries does love create its happiness!): while she was looking sadly at the huge screen, he succeeded in slipping a tiny piece of wire through the hole which the iron cross had

bored, and made signs to her which she evidently understood, at least in the sense that they implied: "I am here and I see you."

Fabrizio was unfortunate on the days that followed. He was anxious to cut out of the colossal screen a piece of board the size of his hand, which could be replaced when he chose, and which would enable him to see and to be seen, that is to say to speak, by signs at least, of what was passing in his heart; but he found that the noise of the very imperfect little saw which he had made by notching the spring of his watch with the cross aroused Grillo, who came and spent long hours in his cell. It is true that he thought he noticed that Clelia's severity seemed to diminish as the material difficulties in the way of any communication between them increased; Fabrizio was fully aware that she no longer pretended to lower her eyes or to look at the birds when he was trying to shew her a sign of his presence by means of his wretched little piece of wire; he had the pleasure of seeing that she never failed to appear in the aviary at the precise moment when the quarter before noon struck, and he almost presumed to imagine himself to be the cause of this remarkable punctuality. Why? Such an idea does not seem reasonable; but love detects shades invisible to the indifferent eye, and draws endless conclusions from them. For instance, now that Clelia could no longer see the prisoner, almost immediately on entering the aviary she would raise her eyes to his window. These were the funereal days on which no one in Parma had any doubt that Fabrizio would shortly be put to death: he alone knew nothing; but this terrible thought never left Clelia's mind for a moment, and how could she reproach herself for the excessive interest which she felt in Fabrizio? He was about to perish—and for the cause of freedom! For it was too absurd to put a del Dongo to death for running his sword into a mummer.

It was true that this attractive young man was attached to another woman! Clelia was profoundly unhappy, and without admitting to herself at all precisely the kind of interest that she took in his fate: "Certainly," she said to herself, "if they lead him out to die, I shall fly to a convent, and never in my life will I reappear in that society of the court; it horrifies me. Kid-gloved assassins!"

On the eighth day of Fabrizio's imprisonment, she had good cause to blush: she was watching fixedly, absorbed in her sorrowful thoughts, the screen that hid the prisoner's window: suddenly a small piece of the screen, larger than a man's hand, was removed by him; he looked at her with an air of gaiety, and she could see his eyes which were greeting her. She had not the strength to endure this unlooked-for trial, she turned swiftly towards her birds and began to attend to them; but she trembled so much that she spilled the water which she was pouring out for them, and Fabrizio could perfectly well see her emotion; she could not endure this situation, and took the prudent course of running from the room.

This was the best moment in Fabrizio's life, beyond all comparison. With what transports would he have refused his freedom, had it been offered to him at that instant!

The following day was the day of the Duchessa's great despair. Everyone in the town was certain that it was all over with Fabrizio. Clelia had not the melancholy courage to show him a harshness that was not in her heart, she spent an hour and a half in the aviary, watched all his signals, and often answered him, at least by an expression of the keenest and sincerest interest; at certain moments she turned from him so as not to let him see her tears. Her feminine coquetry felt very strongly the inadequacy of the language employed: if they could have spoken, in how many different ways could she not have sought to discover what precisely was the nature of the sentiments which

Fabrizio felt for the Duchessa! Clelia was now almost unable to delude herself any longer; her feeling for Signora Sanseverina was one of hatred.

One night Fabrizio began to think somewhat seriously of his aunt: he was amazed, he found a difficulty in recognising her image; the memory that he kept of her had totally changed; for him, at this moment, she was a woman of fifty.

"Great God!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "how well inspired I was not to tell her that I loved her!" He had reached the point of being barely able to understand how he had found her so good looking. In this connexion little Marietta gave him the impression of a less perceptible change: this was because he had never imagined that his heart entered at all into his love for Marietta, while often he had believed that his whole heart belonged to the Duchessa. The Duchessa d'A—— and Marietta now had the effect on him of two young doves whose whole charm would be in weakness and innocence, whereas the sublime image of Clelia Conti, taking entire possession of his heart, went so far as to inspire him with terror. He felt only too well that the eternal happiness of his life was to force him to reckon with the governor's daughter, and that it lay in her power to make of him the unhappiest of men. Every day he went in mortal fear of seeing brought to a sudden end, by a caprice of her will against which there was no appeal, this sort of singular and delicious life which he found in her presence; in any event she had already filled with joy the first two months of his imprisonment. It was the time when, twice a week, General Fabio Conti was saying to the Prince: "I can give Your Highness my word of honour that the prisoner del Dongo does not speak to a living soul, and is spending his life crushed by the most profound despair, or asleep."

Clelia came two or three times daily to visit her birds,

sometimes for a few moments only; if Fabrizio had not loved her so well, he would have seen clearly that he was loved; but he had serious doubts on this head. Clelia had had a piano put in her aviary. As she struck the notes, that the sound of the instrument might account for her presence there, and occupy the minds of the sentries who were patrolling beneath her windows, she replied with her eyes to Fabrizio's questions. On one subject alone she never made any answer, and indeed, on serious occasions, took flight, and sometimes disappeared for a whole day; this was when Fabrizio's signals indicated sentiments the import of which it was too difficult not to understand: on this point she was inexorable.

Thus, albeit straitly confined in a small enough cage, Fabrizio led a fully occupied life; it was entirely devoted to seeking the solution of this important problem: "Does she love me?" The result of thousands of observations, incessantly repeated, but also incessantly subjected to doubt, was as follows: "All her deliberate gestures say no, but what is involuntary in the movement of her eyes seems to admit that she is forming an affection for me."

Clelia hoped that she might never be brought to an avowal, and it was to avert this danger that she had repulsed, with an excessive show of anger, a prayer which Fabrizio had several times addressed to her. The wretchedness of the resources employed by the poor prisoner ought, it might seem, to have inspired greater pity in Clelia. He sought to correspond with her by means of letters which he traced on his hand with a piece of charcoal of which he had made the precious discovery in his stove; he would have formed the words letter by letter, in succession. This invention would have doubled the means of conversation, inasmuch as it would have allowed him to say actual words. His window was distant from Clelia's about twenty-five feet; it would have been too great a risk

to speak aloud over the heads of the sentries patrolling outside the governor's *palazzo*. Fabrizio was in doubt whether he was loved; if he had had any experience of love, he would have had no doubt left: but never had a woman occupied his heart; he had, moreover, no suspicion of a secret which would have plunged him in despair had he known it: there was a serious question of the marriage of Clelia Conti to the Marchese Crescenzi, the richest man at court.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

GENERAL FABIO CONTI'S ambition, exalted to madness by the obstacles which were occurring in the career of the Prime Minister Mosca, and seemed to forebode his fall, had led him to make violent scenes before his daughter; he told her incessantly, and angrily, that she was ruining her own prospects if she did not finally make up her mind to choose a husband; at twenty and past it was time to make a match; this cruel state of isolation, in which her unreasonable obstinacy was plunging the General, must be brought to an end, and so forth.

It was originally to escape from these continual bursts of ill humour that Clelia had taken refuge in the aviary; it could be reached only by an extremely awkward wooden stair, which his gout made a serious obstacle to the governor.

For some weeks now Clelia's heart had been so agitated, she herself knew so little what she ought to decide, that, without giving any definite promise to her father, she had almost let herself be engaged. In one of his fits of rage, the General had shouted that he could easily send her to cool her heels in the most depressing convent in Parma, and that there he would let her stew until she deigned to make a choice.

"You know that our family, old as it is, cannot muster a rent-roll of 6,000 lire, while the Marchese Crescenzi's fortune amounts to more than 100,000 scudi a year. Everyone at court agrees that he has the sweetest temper; he

has never given anyone cause for complaint; he is a fine looking man, young, popular with the Prince; and I say that you ought to be shut up in a madhouse if you reject his advances. If this were the first refusal, I might perhaps put up with it, but there have been five or six suitors now, all among the first men at court, whom you have rejected, like the little fool that you are. And what would become of you, I ask you, if I were to be put on half-pay? What a triumph for my enemies, if they saw me living in some second-floor apartment, I who have so often been talked of for the Ministry! No, begad, my good nature has let me play Cassandra quite long enough. You will kindly supply me with some valid objection to this poor Marchese Crescenzi, who is so kind as to be in love with you, to be willing to marry you without a dowry, and to make over to you a jointure of 30,000 lire a year, which will at least pay my rent; you will talk to me reasonably, or, by heaven, you will marry him in two months from now!"

One passage alone in the whole of this speech had struck Clelia; this was the threat to send her to a convent, and thereby remove her from the citadel, at the moment, moreover, when Fabrizio's life seemed to be hanging only by a thread, for not a month passed in which the rumour of his approaching death did not run afresh through the town and through the court. Whatever arguments she might use, she could not make up her mind to run this risk. To be separated from Fabrizio, and at the moment when she was trembling for his life! This was in her eyes the greatest of evils; it was at any rate the most immediate.

This is not to say that, even in not being parted from Fabrizio, her heart found any prospect of happiness; she believed him to be loved by the Duchessa, and her soul was torn by a deadly jealousy. Incessantly she thought

of the advantages enjoyed by this woman who was so generally admired. The extreme reserve which she imposed on herself with regard to Fabrizio, the language of signs to which she had restricted him, from fear of falling into some indiscretion, all seemed to combine to take from her the means of arriving at any enlightenment as to his relations with the Duchessa. Thus, every day, she felt more cruelly than before the frightful misfortune of having a rival in the heart of Fabrizio, and every day she dared less to expose herself to the danger of giving him an opportunity to tell her the whole truth as to what was passing in that heart. But how charming it would be, nevertheless, to hear him make an avowal of his true feelings! What a joy for Clelia to be able to clear away those frightful suspicions which were poisoning her life!

Fabrizio was fickle; at Naples he had had the reputation of changing his mistress rather easily. Despite all the reserve imposed on the character of a young lady, since she had become a Canoness and had gone to court, Clelia, without ever asking questions, but by listening attentively, had succeeded in learning the reputation that had been made for themselves by the young men who in succession had sought her hand; very well, Fabrizio, when compared with all these young men, was the one who was charged with being most fickle in affairs of the heart. He was in prison, he was dull, he was paying court to the one woman to whom he could speak; what more simple? What, indeed, *more common?* And it was this that grieved Clelia. Even if, by a complete revelation, she should learn that Fabrizio no longer loved the Duchessa, what confidence could she have in his words? Even if she believed in the sincerity of what he said, what confidence could she have in the permanence of his feelings? And lastly, to drive the final stroke of despair into her heart,

was not Fabrizio already far advanced in his career as a churchman? Was he not on the eve of binding himself by lifelong vows? Did not the highest dignities await him in that walk in life? "If the least glimmer of sense remained in my mind," the unhappy Clelia said to herself, "ought I not to take flight? Ought I not to beg my father to shut me up in some convent far away? And, as a last straw, it is precisely the fear of being sent away from the citadel and shut up in a convent that is governing all my conduct! It is that fear which is forcing me to hide the truth, which is obliging me to act the hideous and degrading lie of pretending to accept the public attentions of the Marchese Crescenzi."

Clelia was by nature profoundly reasonable; in the whole of her life she had never had to reproach herself with a single unconsidered step, and her conduct on this occasion was the height of unreason: one may judge of her sufferings! They were all the more cruel in that she let herself rest under no illusion. She was attaching herself to a man who was desperately loved by the most beautiful woman at court, a woman who had so many claims to be reckoned superior to Clelia herself! And this man himself, had he been at liberty, was incapable of a serious attachment, whereas she, as she felt only too well, would never have but this one attachment in her life.

It was, therefore, with a heart agitated by the most frightful remorse that Clelia came every day to the aviary: carried to this spot as though in spite of herself, her uneasiness changed its object and became less cruel, the remorse vanished for a few moments; she watched, with indescribable beatings of her heart, for the moments at which Fabrizio could open the sort of hatch that he had made in the enormous screen which masked his window. Often the presence of the gaoler Grillo in his cell prevented him from conversing by signs with his friend.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

One evening, about eleven, Fabrizio heard sounds of the strangest nature in the citadel: at night, by leaning on the window-sill and poking his head out through the hatch, he could distinguish any noise at all loud that was made on the great staircase, called "of the three hundred steps," which led from the first courtyard, inside the round tower, to the stone platform on which had been built the governor's *palazzo* and the Farnese prison in which he himself was.

About half-way up, at the hundred and eightieth step, this staircase passed from the south side of a vast court to the north side; at this point there was an iron bridge, very light and very narrow, on the middle of which a turnkey was posted. This man was relieved every six hours, and was obliged to rise and stand to one side to enable anyone to pass over the bridge which he guarded, and by which alone one could reach the governor's *palazzo* and the Torre Farnese. Two turns of a spring, the key of which the governor carried on his person, were enough to hurl this iron bridge down into the court, more than a hundred feet below; this simple precaution once taken, as there was no other staircase in the whole of the citadel, and as every evening at midnight a serjeant brought to the governor's house, and placed in a closet which was reached through his bedroom, the ropes of all the wells, he was left completely inaccessible in his *palazzo,* and it would have been equally impossible for anyone in the world to reach the Torre Farnese. All this Fabrizio had thoroughly observed for himself on the day of his arrival at the citadel, while Grillo who, like all gaolers, loved to boast of his prison, had explained it to him many times since; thus he had but little hope of escape. At the same time he reminded himself of a maxim of Priore Blanès: "The lover thinks more often of reaching his mistress than

the husband of guarding his wife; the prisoner thinks more often of escaping than the gaoler of shutting his door; and so, whatever the obstacles may be, the lover and the prisoner ought to succeed."

That evening Fabrizio could hear quite distinctly a considerable number of men cross the iron bridge, known as the Slave's bridge, because once a Dalmatian slave had succeeded in escaping, by throwing the guardian of the bridge down into the court below.

"They are coming here to carry off somebody, perhaps they are going to take me out to hang me; but there may be some disorder, I must make the most of it." He had armed himself, he was already taking the gold from some of his hiding-places, when suddenly he stopped.

"Man is a quaint animal," he exclaimed, "I must admit! What would an invisible onlooker say if he saw my preparations? Do I by any chance wish to escape? What would happen to me the day after my return to Parma? Should I not be doing everything in the world to return to Clelia? If there is some disorder, let us profit by it to slip into the governor's *palazzo;* perhaps I may be able to speak to her, perhaps, encouraged by the disorder, I may venture to kiss her hand. General Conti, highly mistrustful by nature, and no less vain, has his *palazzo* guarded by five sentries, one at each corner of the building and a fifth outside the door, but fortunately the night is very dark." On tiptoe Fabrizio stole down to find out what the gaoler Grillo and his dog were doing: the gaoler was fast asleep in an oxhide suspended by four ropes and enclosed in a coarse net; the dog Fox opened his eyes, rose, and came quietly towards Fabrizio to lick his hand.

Our prisoner returned softly up the six steps which led to his wooden cell; the noise was becoming so loud at the foot of the Torre Farnese, and immediately opposite the

door, that he thought that Grillo might easily awake. Fabrizio, armed with all his weapons, ready for action, was imagining that he was destined that night for great adventures, when suddenly he heard the most beautiful symphony in the world strike up: it was a serenade which was being given to the governor or his daughter. He was seized with a fit of wild laughter: "And I who was already dreaming of striking dagger-blows! As though a serenade were not infinitely more normal than an abduction requiring the presence of two dozen people in a prison, or than a mutiny!" The music was excellent, and seemed to Fabrizio delicious, his spirit having had no distraction for so many weeks; it made him shed very pleasant tears; in his delight he addressed the most irresistible speeches to the fair Clelia. But the following day, at noon, he found her in so sombre a melancholy, she was so pale, she directed at him a gaze in which he read at times such anger, that he did not feel himself to be sufficiently justified in putting any question to her as to the serenade; he was afraid of being impolite.

Clelia had every reason to be sad, it was a serenade given her by the Marchese Crescenzi; a step so public was in a sense the official announcement of their marriage. Until the very day of the serenade, and until nine o'clock that evening, Clelia had set up the bravest resistance, but she had had the weakness to yield to the threat of her being sent immediately to a convent, which had been held over her by her father.

"What! I should never see him again!" she had said to herself, weeping. It was in vain that her reason had added: "I should never see again that creature who will harm me in every possible way, I should never see again that lover of the Duchessa, I should never see again that man who had ten acknowledged mistresses at Naples, and was unfaithful to them all; I should never see again that am-

bitious young man who, if he survives the sentence that he is undergoing, is to take holy orders! It would be a crime for me to look at him again when he is out of his citadel, and his natural inconstancy will spare me the temptation; for, what am I to him? An excuse for spending less tediously a few hours of each of his days in prison." In the midst of all this abuse, Clelia happened to remember the smile with which he had looked at the constables who surrounded him when he came out of the turnkey's office to go up to the Torre Farnese. The tears welled into her eyes: "Dear friend, what would I not do for you? You will ruin me, I know; such is my fate; I am ruining myself in a terrible fashion by listening to-night to this frightful serenade; but to-morrow, at mid-day, I shall see your eyes again."

It was precisely on the morrow of that day on which Clelia had made such great sacrifices for the young prisoner, whom she loved with so strong a passion; it was on the morrow of that day on which, seeing all his faults, she had sacrificed her life to him, that Fabrizio was in despair at her coldness. If, even employing only the imperfect language of signs, he had done the slightest violence to Clelia's heart, probably she would not have been able to keep back her tears, and Fabrizio would have won an avowal of all that she felt for him; but he lacked the courage, he was in too deadly a fear of offending Clelia, she could punish him with too severe a penalty. In other words, Fabrizio had no experience of the emotion that is given one by a woman whom one loves; it was a sensation which he had never felt, even in the feeblest degree. It took him a week, from the day of the serenade, to place himself once more on the old footing of simple friendship with Clelia. The poor girl armed herself with severity, being half dead with

fear of betraying herself, and it seemed to Fabrizio that every day he was losing ground with her.

One day (and Fabrizio had then been nearly three months in prison without having had any communication whatever with the outer world, and yet without feeling unhappy), Grillo had stayed very late in the morning in his cell: Fabrizio did not know how to get rid of him; in the end, half past twelve had already struck before he was able to open the two little traps, a foot high, which he had carved in the fatal screen.

Clelia was standing at the aviary window, her eyes fixed on Fabrizio's; her drawn features expressed the most violent despair. As soon as she saw Fabrizio, she made him a sign that all was lost: she dashed to her piano, and, pretending to sing a *recitativo* from the popular opera of the season, spoke to him in sentences broken by her despair and the fear of being overheard by the sentries who were patrolling beneath the window:

"Great God! You are still alive? How grateful I am to heaven! Barbone, the gaoler whose impudence you punished on the day of your coming here, disappeared, was not to be found in the citadel; the night before last he returned, and since yesterday I have had reason to believe that he is seeking to poison you. He comes prowling through the private kitchen of the *palazzo,* where your meals are prepared. I know nothing for certain, but my maid thinks that the horrible creature can only be coming to the *palazzo* kitchens with the object of taking your life. I was dying of anxiety when I did not see you appear, I thought you were dead. Abstain from all nourishment until further notice, I shall do everything possible to see that a little chocolate comes to you. In any case, this evening at nine, if the bounty of heaven

wills that you have any thread, or that you can tie strips of your linen together in a riband, let it down from your window over the orange trees, I shall fasten a cord to it which you can pull up, and by means of the cord I shall keep you supplied with bread and chocolate."

Fabrizio had carefully treasured the piece of charcoal which he had found in the stove in his cell: he hastened to make the most of Clelia's emotion, and wrote on his hand a series of letters which taken in order formed these words:

"I love you, and life is dear to me only because I see you; at all costs, send me paper and a pencil."

As Fabrizio had hoped, the extreme terror which he read in Clelia's features prevented the girl from breaking off the conversation after this daring announcement, "I love you"; she was content with exhibiting great vexation. Fabrizio was inspired to add: "There is such a wind blowing to-day that I can only catch very faintly the advice you are so kind as to give me in your singing; the sound of the piano is drowning your voice. What is this poison, for instance, that you tell me of?"

At these words the girl's terror reappeared in its entirety; she began in haste to trace large letters in ink on the pages of a book which she tore out, and Fabrizio was transported with joy to see at length established, after three months of effort, this channel of correspondence for which he had so vainly begged. He had no thought of abandoning the little ruse which had proved so successful, his aim was to write real letters, and he pretended at every moment not to understand the words of which Clelia was holding up each letter in turn before his eyes.

She was obliged to leave the aviary to go to her father;

she feared more than anything that he might come to look for her; his suspicious nature would not have been at all satisfied with the close proximity of the window of this aviary to the screen which masked that of the prisoner. Clelia herself had had the idea a few moments earlier, when Fabrizio's failure to appear was plunging her in so deadly an anxiety, that it might be possible to throw a small stone wrapped in a piece of paper over the top of this screen; if by a lucky chance the gaoler in charge of Fabrizio happened not to be in his cell at that moment, it was a certain method of corresponding with him.

Our hero hastened to make a riband of sorts out of his linen; and that evening, shortly after nine, he heard quite distinctly a series of little taps on the tubs of the orange trees which stood beneath his window; he let down his riband, which brought back with it a fine cord of great length with the help of which he drew up first of all a supply of chocolate, and then, to his unspeakable satisfaction, a roll of paper and a pencil. It was in vain that he let down the cord again, he received nothing more; apparently the sentries had come near the orange trees. But he was wild with joy. He hastened to write Clelia an endless letter: no sooner was it finished than he attached it to the cord and let it down. For more than three hours he waited in vain for it to be taken, and more than once drew it up again to make alterations. "If Clelia does not see my letter to-night," he said to himself, "while she is still upset by her idea of poison, tomorrow morning perhaps she will utterly reject the idea of receiving a letter."

The fact was that Clelia had been unable to avoid going down to the town with her father; Fabrizio almost guessed as much when he heard, about half past twelve, the General's carriage return; he recognised the trot of the horses. What was his joy when, a few minutes after

he had heard the General cross the terrace and the sentries present arms to him, he felt a pull at the cord which he had not ceased to keep looped round his arm! A heavy weight was attached to this cord; two little tugs gave him the signal to draw it up. He had considerable difficulty in getting the heavy object that he was lifting past a cornice which jutted out some way beneath his window.

This object which he had so much difficulty in pulling up was a flask filled with water and wrapped in a shawl. It was with ecstasy that this poor young man, who had been living for so long in so complete a solitude, covered this shawl with his kisses. But we must abandon the attempt to describe his emotion when at last, after so many days of fruitless expectation, he discovered a little scrap of paper which was attached to the shawl by a pin.

"Drink nothing but this water, live upon chocolate; to-morrow I shall do everything in the world to get some bread to you, I shall mark it on each side with little crosses in ink. It is a terrible thing to say, but you must know it, perhaps Barbone has been ordered to poison you. How is it that you did not feel that the subject of which you treat in your pencilled letter was bound to displease me? Besides, I should not write to you, but for the danger that threatens us. I have just seen the Duchessa, she is well and so is the Conte, but she has grown very thin; do not write to me again on that subject; do you wish to make me angry?"

It required a great effort of virtue on Clelia's part to write the penultimate line of this letter. Everyone alleged, in the society at court, that Signora Sanseverina was becoming extremely friendly with Conte Baldi, that handsome man, the former friend of the Marchesa Raversi. What was certain was that he had quarrelled in the most

open fashion with the said Marchesa, who for six years had been a second mother to him and had established him in society.

Clelia had been obliged to begin this hasty little note over again, for, in the first draft, some allusion escaped her to the fresh amours with which popular malice credited the Duchessa.

"How base of me!" she had exclaimed, "to say things to Fabrizio against the woman he loves!"

The following morning, long before it was light, Grillo came into Fabrizio's cell, left there a package of some weight, and vanished without saying a word. This package contained a loaf of bread of some size, adorned on every side with little crosses traced in ink: Fabrizio covered them with kisses; he was in love. Besides the bread there was a roll wrapped in a large number of folds of paper; these enclosed six hundred francs in sequins; last of all Fabrizio found a handsome breviary, quite new: a hand which he was beginning to know had traced these words on the margin:

*"Poison!* Beware of water, wine, everything; live upon chocolate, try to make the dog eat your untouched dinner; you must not appear distrustful, the enemy would try some other plan. Do nothing foolish, in Heaven's Name! No frivolity!"

Fabrizio made haste to erase these dear words which might compromise Clelia, and to tear a large number of pages from the breviary, with the help of which he made several alphabets; each letter was properly drawn with crushed charcoal soaked in wine. These alphabets had dried when at a quarter to twelve Clelia appeared, a few feet inside the aviary window. "The great thing now," Fabrizio said to himself, "is that she shall consent to make use of these." But, fortunately for him, it so happened that she had a number of things to say to the

young prisoner with regard to the attempt to poison him: a dog belonging to one of the maidservants had died after eating a dish that was intended for him. Clelia, so far from raising any objection to the use of the alphabets, had prepared a magnificent one for herself, in ink. The conversation carried out by these means, awkward enough in the first few moments, lasted not less than an hour and a half, that is to say all the time that Clelia was able to spend in the aviary. Two or three times, when Fabrizio allowed himself forbidden liberties, she made no answer, and turned away for a moment to give the necessary attention to her birds.

Fabrizio had obtained the concession that, in the evening, when she sent him his water, she would convey to him one of the alphabets which she had written in ink, and which were far more visible. He did not fail to write her a very long letter in which he took care not to include anything affectionate, in a manner at least that might give offence. This plan proved successful; his letter was accepted.

Next day, in their conversation by the alphabets, Clelia made him no reproach; she told him that the danger of poison was growing less; Barbone had been attacked and almost killed by the men who were keeping company with the kitchen-maids of the governor's *palazzo;* probably he would not venture to appear in the kitchens again. Clelia confessed to him that, for his sake, she had dared to steal an antidote from her father; she was sending it to him; the essential thing was to refuse at once all food in which he detected an unusual taste.

Clelia had put many questions to Don Cesare without succeeding in discovering who had sent the six hundred francs which Fabrizio had received; in any case, it was an excellent sign; the severity was decreasing.

This episode of the poison advanced our hero's posi-

tion enormously; he was still unable ever to obtain the least admission that resembled love, but he had the happiness of living on the most intimate terms with Clelia. Every morning, and often in the evening, there was a long conversation with the alphabets; every evening, at nine o'clock, Clelia accepted a long letter, to which she sometimes replied in a few words; she sent him the newspaper and several books; finally, Grillo had been won over to the extent of bringing Fabrizio bread and wine, which were given him every day by Clelia's maid. The gaoler Grillo had concluded from this that the governor was not acting in concert with the people who had ordered Barbone to poison the young Monsignore, and was greatly relieved, as were all his fellows, for it had become a proverb in the prison that "you had only to look Monsignor del Dongo in the face for him to give you money."

Fabrizio had grown very pale; the complete want of exercise was affecting his health; apart from this, he had never in his life been so happy. The tone of the conversation between Clelia and himself was intimate, and at times quite gay. The only moments in Clelia's life that were not besieged by grim forebodings and remorse were those which she spent in talk with him. One day she was so rash as to say to him:

"I admire your delicacy; as I am the governor's daughter, you never speak to me of your desire to regain your freedom!"

"That is because I take good care not to feel so absurd a desire," was Fabrizio's answer; "once back in Parma, how should I see you again? And life would become insupportable if I could not tell you all that is in my mind —no, not quite all that is in my mind, you take good care of that: but still, in spite of your hard-heartedness,

to live without seeing you every day would be to me a far worse punishment than this prison! Never in my life have I been so happy! . . . Is it not pleasant to find that happiness was awaiting me in prison?"

"There is a great deal more to be said about that," replied Clelia with an air which became of a sudden unduly serious and almost sinister.

"What!" cried Fabrizio, greatly alarmed, "is there a risk of my losing the tiny place I have managed to win in your heart, which constitutes my sole joy in this world?"

"Yes," she told him; "I have good reason to believe that you are lacking in frankness towards me, although you may be regarded generally as a great gentleman; but I do not wish to speak of this to-day."

This singular opening caused great embarrassment in their conversation, and often tears started to the eyes of both.

The Fiscal General Rassi was still anxious to change his name; he was tired to death of the name he had made for himself, and wished to become Barone Riva. Conte Mosca, for his part, was toiling, with all the skill of which he was capable, to strengthen in this venal judge his passion for the barony, just as he was seeking to intensify in the Prince his mad hope of making himself Constitutional Monarch of Lombardy. They were the only means that he could invent of postponing the death of Fabrizio.

The Prince said to Rassi:

"A fortnight of despair and a fortnight of hope, it is by patiently carrying out this system that we shall succeed in subduing that proud woman's nature; it is by these alternatives of mildness and harshness that one manages to break the wildest horses. Apply the caustic firmly."

And indeed, every fortnight, one saw a fresh rumour come to birth in Parma announcing the death of Fabrizio in the near future. This talk plunged the unhappy Duchessa in the utmost despair. Faithful to her resolution not to involve the Conte in her downfall, she saw him but twice monthly; but she was punished for her cruelty towards that poor man by the continual alternations of dark despair in which she was passing her life. In vain did Conte Mosca, overcoming the cruel jealousy inspired in him by the assiduities of Conte Baldi, that handsome man, write to the Duchessa when he could not see her, and acquaint her with all the intelligence that he owed to the zeal of the future Barone Riva; the Duchessa would have needed (for strength to resist the atrocious rumours that were incessantly going about with regard to Fabrizio), to spend her life with a man of intelligence and heart such as Mosca; the nullity of Baldi, leaving her to her own thoughts, gave her an appalling existence, and the Conte could not succeed in communicating to her his reasons for hope.

By means of various pretexts of considerable ingenuity the Minister had succeeded in making the Prince agree to his depositing in a friendly castle, in the very heart of Lombardy, the records of all the highly complicated intrigues by means of which Ranuccio-Ernest IV nourished the utterly mad hope of making himself Constitutional Monarch of that smiling land.

More than a score of these extremely compromising documents were in the Prince's hand, or bore his signature, and in the event of Fabrizio's life being seriously threatened the Conte had decided to announce to His Highness that he was going to hand these documents over to a great power which with a word could crush him.

Conte Mosca believed that he could rely upon the future Barone Riva, he was afraid only of poison; Barbone's

attempt had greatly alarmed him, and to such a point that he had determined to risk taking a step which, to all appearance, was an act of madness. One morning he went to the gate of the citadel and sent for General Fabio Conti, who came down as far as the bastion above the gate; there, strolling with him in a friendly fashion, he had no hesitation in saying to him, after a short preamble, acidulated but polite:

"If Fabrizio dies in any suspicious manner, his death may be put down to me; I shall get a reputation for jealousy, which would be an absurd and abominable stigma and one that I am determined not to accept. So, to clear myself in the matter, if he dies of illness, *I shall kill you with my own hand;* you may count on that." General Fabio Conti made a magnificent reply and spoke of his bravery, but the look in the Conte's eyes remained present in his thoughts.

A few days later, as though he were working in concert with the Conte, the Fiscal Rassi took a liberty which was indeed singular in a man of his sort. The public contempt attached to his name, which was proverbial among the rabble, had made him ill since he had acquired the hope of being able to change it. He addressed to General Fabio Conti an official copy of the sentence which condemned Fabrizio to twelve years in the citadel. According to the law, this was what should have been done on the very day after Fabrizio's admission to prison; but what was unheard-of at Parma, in that land of secret measures, was that Justice should allow itself to take such a step without an express order from the Sovereign. How indeed could the Prince entertain the hope of doubling every fortnight the Duchessa's alarm, and of subduing that proud spirit, to quote his own words, once an official copy of the sentence had gone out from the Chancellory of Justice? On the day before that on

which General Fabio Conti received the official document from the Fiscal Rassi, he learned that the clerk Barbone had been beaten black and blue on returning rather late to the citadel; he concluded from this that there was no longer any question, in a certain quarter, of getting rid of Fabrizio; and, in a moment of prudence which saved Rassi from the immediate consequences of his folly, he said nothing to the Prince, at the next audience which he obtained of him, of the official copy of Fabrizio's sentence which had been transmitted to him. The Conte had discovered, happily for the peace of mind of the unfortunate Duchessa, that Barbone's clumsy attempt had been only an act of personal revenge, and had caused the clerk to be given the warning of which we have spoken.

Fabrizio was very agreeably surprised when, after one hundred and thirty-five days of confinement in a distinctly narrow cell, the good chaplain Don Cesare came to him one Thursday to take him for an airing on the dungeon of the Torre Farnese: he had not been there ten minutes before, unaccustomed to the fresh air, he began to feel faint.

Don Cesare made this accident an excuse to allow him half an hour's exercise every day. This was a mistake: these frequent airings soon restored to our hero a strength which he abused.

There were several serenades; the punctilious governor allowed them only because they created an engagement between the Marchese Crescenzi and his daughter Clelia, whose character alarmed him; he felt vaguely that there was no point of contact between her and himself, and was always afraid of some rash action on her part. She might fly to the convent, and he would be left helpless. At the same time, the General was afraid that all this music, the sound of which could penetrate into the deepest

dungeons, reserved for the blackest Liberals, might contain signals. The musicians themselves, too, made him suspicious; and so no sooner was the serenade at an end than they were locked into the big rooms below the governor's *palazzo,* which by day served as an office for the staff, and the door was not opened to let them out until the following morning, when it was broad daylight. It was the governor himself who, stationed on the Slave's Bridge, had them searched in his presence and gave them their liberty, not without several times repeating that he would have hanged at once any of them who had the audacity to undertake the smallest commission for any prisoner. And they knew that, in his fear of giving offence, he was a man of his word, so that the Marchese Crescenzi was obliged to pay his musicians at a triple rate, they being greatly upset at thus having to spend a night in prison.

All that the Duchessa could obtain, and that with great difficulty, from the pusillanimity of one of these men was that he should take with him a letter to be handed to the governor. The letter was addressed to Fabrizio: the writer deplored the fatality which had brought it about that, after he had been more than five months in prison, his friends outside had not been able to establish any communication with him.

On entering the citadel, the bribed musician flung himself at the feet of General Fabio Conti, and confessed to him that a priest, unknown to him, had so insisted upon his taking a letter addressed to Signor del Dongo that he had not dared to refuse; but, faithful to his duty, he was hastening to place it in His Excellency's hands.

His Excellency was highly flattered: he knew the resources at the Duchessa's disposal, and was in great fear of being hoaxed. In his joy, the General went to submit this letter to the Prince, who was delighted.

"So, the firmness of my administration has brought me my revenge! That proud woman has been suffering for more than six months! But one of these days we are going to have a scaffold erected, and her wild imagination will not fail to believe that it is intended for young del Dongo."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

ONE night, about one o'clock in the morning, Fabrizio, leaning upon his window-sill, had slipped his head through the door cut in his screen and was contemplating the stars and the immense horizon which one enjoyed from the summit of the Torre Farnese. His eyes, roaming over the country in the direction of the lower Po and Ferrara, noticed quite by chance an extremely small but quite brilliant light which seemed to be shining from the top of a tower. "That light cannot be visible from the plain," Fabrizio said to himself, "the bulk of the tower prevents it from being seen from below; it will be some signal for a distant point." Suddenly he noticed that this light kept on appearing and disappearing at very short intervals. "It is some girl speaking to her lover in the next village." He counted nine flashes in succession. "That is an *I*," he said, "*I* being the ninth letter of the alphabet." There followed, after a pause, fourteen flashes: "That is *N*"; then, after another pause, a single flash: "It is an *A*; the word is *Ina*."

What were his joy and surprise when the next series of flashes, still separated by short pauses, made up the following words:

INA PENSA A TE

Evidently, "Gina is thinking of you!"

He replied at once by flashing his own lamp through the smaller of the holes that he had made:

FABRIZIO T'AMA ("Fabrizio loves you!")

## CHAPTER TWENTY

The conversation continued until daybreak. This night was the one hundred and seventy-third of his imprisonment, and he was informed that for four months they had been making these signals every night. But anyone might see and read them; they began from this night to establish a system of abbreviations: three flashes in very quick succession meant the Duchessa; four, the Prince; two, Conte Mosca; two quick flashes followed by two slow ones meant *escape*. They agreed to use in future the old alphabet *alla Monaca,* which, so as not to be understood by unauthorised persons, changes the ordinary sequence of the letters, and gives them arbitrary values: *A,* for instance, is represented by 10, *B* by *Z;* that is to say three successive interruptions of the flash mean *B,* ten successive interruptions *A,* and so on; an interval of darkness separates the words. An appointment was made for the following night at one o'clock, and that night the Duchessa came to the tower, which was a quarter of a league from the town. Her eyes filled with tears as she saw the signals made by the Fabrizio whom she had so often imagined dead. She told him herself, by flashes of the lamp: *"I love you—courage—health—hope. Exercise your strength in your cell, you will need the strength of your arms.*—I have not seen him," she said to herself, "since that concert with Fausta, when he appeared at the door of my drawing-room dressed as a *chasseur.* Who would have said then what a fate was in store for him?"

The Duchessa had signals made which informed Fabrizio that presently he would be released THANKS TO THE PRINCE'S BOUNTY (these signals might be intercepted); then she returned to messages of affection; she could not tear herself from him. Only the representations made by Lodovico, who, because he had been of use to Fabrizio, had become her factotum, could prevail upon

her, when day was already breaking, to discontinue signals which might attract the attention of some ill-disposed person. This announcement, several times repeated, of an approaching release, cast Fabrizio into a profound sorrow. Clelia, noticing this next day, was so imprudent as to inquire the cause of it.

"I can see myself on the point of giving the Duchessa serious grounds for displeasure."

"And what can she require of you that you would refuse her?" exclaimed Clelia, carried away by the most lively curiosity.

"She wishes me to leave this place," was his answer, "and that is what I will never consent to do."

Clelia could not reply: she looked at him and burst into tears. If he had been able to speak to her face to face, then perhaps he would have received her avowal of feelings, his uncertainty as to which often plunged him in a profound discouragement; he felt keenly that life without Clelia's love could be for him only a succession of bitter griefs or intolerable tedium. He felt that it was no longer worth his while to live to rediscover those same pleasures that had seemed to him interesting before he knew what love was, and, albeit suicide has not yet become fashionable in Italy, he had thought of it as a last resource, if fate were to part him from Clelia.

Next day he received a long letter from her:

"You must, my friend, be told the truth: over and over again, since you have been here, it has been believed in Parma that your last day had come. It is true that you were sentenced only to twelve years in a fortress; but it is, unfortunately, impossible to doubt that an all-powerful hatred is bent on your destruction, and a score of times I have trembled for fear that poison was going to put an end to your

days: you must therefore seize every *possible* means of escaping from here. You see that for your sake I am neglecting the most sacred duties; judge of the imminence of the danger by the things which I venture to say to you, and which are so out of place on my lips. If it is absolutely necessary, if there is no other way of safety, fly. Every moment that you spend in this fortress may put your life in the greatest peril; bear in mind that there is a party at court whom the prospect of crime has never deterred from carrying out their designs. And do you not see all the plans of that party constantly circumvented by the superior skill of Conte Mosca? Very well, they have found a sure way of banishing him from Parma, it is the Duchessa's desperation; and are they not only too sure of bringing about the desperation by the death of a certain young prisoner? This point alone, which is unanswerable, ought to make you form a judgment of your situation. You say that you feel friendship for me: think, first of all, that insurmountable obstacles must prevent that feeling from ever becoming at all definite between us. We may have met in our youth, we may each have held out a helping hand to the other in a time of trouble; fate may have set me in this grim place that I might lighten your suffering; but I should never cease to reproach myself if illusions, which nothing justifies or will ever justify, led you not to seize every possible opportunity of removing your life from so terrible a peril. I have lost all peace of mind through the cruel folly I have committed in exchanging with you certain signs of open friendship. If our childish pastimes, with alphabets, led you to form illusions which are so little warranted and which may be so fatal to yourself, it would be vain for me to seek to justify myself by re-

minding you of Barbone's attempt. I should be casting you myself into a far more terrible, far more certain peril, when I thought only to protect you from a momentary danger; and my imprudences are for ever unpardonable if they have given rise to feelings which may lead you to resist the Duchessa's advice. See what you oblige me to repeat to you: save yourself, I command you. . . ."

This letter was very long; certain passages, such as the *I command you* which we have just quoted, gave moments of exquisite hope to Fabrizio's love; it seemed to him that the sentiments underlying the words were distinctly tender, if the expressions used were remarkably prudent. In other instances he paid the penalty for his complete ignorance of this kind of warfare; he saw only simple friendship, or even a very ordinary humanity in this letter from Clelia.

Otherwise, nothing that she told him made him change his intentions for an instant: supposing that the perils which she depicted were indeed real, was it extravagant to purchase, with a few momentary dangers, the happiness of seeing her every day? What sort of life would he lead when he had fled once again to Bologna or to Florence? For, if he escaped from the citadel, he certainly could not hope for permission to live in Parma. And even so, when the Prince should change his mind sufficiently to set him at liberty (which was so highly improbable since he, Fabrizio, had become, for a powerful faction, one of the means of overthrowing Conte Mosca), what sort of life would he lead in Parma, separated from Clelia by all the hatred that divided the two parties? Once or twice in a month, perhaps, chance would place them in the same drawing-room; but even then, what sort of conversation could he hold with her? How could

he recapture that perfect intimacy which, every day now, he enjoyed for several hours? What would be the conversation of the drawing-room, compared with that which they made by alphabets? "And, if I must purchase this life of enjoyment and this unique chance of happiness with a few little dangers, where is the harm in that? And would it not be a further happiness to find thus a feeble opportunity of giving her a proof of my love?"

Fabrizio saw nothing in Clelia's letter but an excuse for asking her for a meeting; it was the sole and constant object of all his desires. He had spoken to her of it once only, and then for an instant, at the moment of his entry into prison; and that was now more than two hundred days ago.

An easy way of meeting Clelia offered itself: the excellent Priore Don Cesare allowed Fabrizio half an hour's exercise on the terrace of the Torre Farnese every Thursday, during the day; but on the other days of the week this airing, which might be observed by all the inhabitants of Parma and the neighbouring villages, and might seriously compromise the governor, took place only at nightfall. To climb to the terrace of the Torre Farnese there was no other stair but that of the little belfry belonging to the chapel so lugubriously decorated in black and white marble, which the reader may perhaps remember. Grillo escorted Fabrizio to this chapel, and opened the little stair to the belfry for him: his duty would have been to accompany him; but, as the evenings were growing cold, the gaoler allowed him to go up by himself, locking him into this belfry which communicated with the terrace, and went back to keep warm in his cell. Very well; one evening, could not Clelia contrive to appear, escorted by her maid, in the black marble chapel?

The whole of the long letter in which Fabrizio replied to Clelia's was calculated to obtain this meeting. Other-

wise, he confided to her, with perfect sincerity, and as though he were writing of someone else, all the reasons which made him decide not to leave the citadel.

"I would expose myself every day to the prospect of a thousand deaths to have the happiness of speaking to you with the help of our alphabets, which now never defeat us for a moment, and you wish me to be such a fool as to exile myself in Parma, or perhaps at Bologna, or even at Florence! You wish me to walk out of here so as to be farther from you! Understand that any such effort is impossible for me; it would be useless to give you my word, I could never keep it."

The result of this request for a meeting was an absence on the part of Clelia which lasted for no fewer than five days; for five days she came to the aviary only at times when she knew that Fabrizio could not make use of the little opening cut in the screen. Fabrizio was in despair; he concluded from this absence that, despite certain glances which had made him conceive wild hopes, he had never inspired in Clelia any sentiments other than those of a simple friendship. "In that case," he asked himself, "what good is life to me? Let the Prince take it from me, he will be welcome; another reason for not leaving the fortress." And it was with a profound feeling of disgust that, every night, he replied to the signals of the little lamp. The Duchessa thought him quite mad when she read, on the record of the messages which Lodovico brought to her every morning, these strange words: *"I do not wish to escape; I wish to die here!"*

During these five days, so cruel for Fabrizio, Clelia was more unhappy than he; she had had the idea, so poignant for a generous nature: "My duty is to take refuge in a convent, far from the citadel; when Fabrizio knows that I am no longer here, and I shall make Grillo and all the gaolers tell him, then he will decide upon an attempt

at escape." But to go to a convent was to abandon for ever all hope of seeing Fabrizio again; and how abandon that hope, when he was furnishing so clear a proof that the sentiments which might at one time have attached him to the Duchessa no longer existed? What more touching proof of love could a young man give? After seven long months in prison, which had seriously affected his health, he refused to regain his liberty. A fickle creature, such as the talk of the courtiers had portrayed Fabrizio in Clelia's eyes as being, would have sacrificed a score of mistresses rather than remain another day in the citadel, and what would such a man not have done to escape from a prison in which, at any moment, poison might put an end to his life?

Clelia lacked courage; she made the signal mistake of not seeking refuge in a convent, a course which would at the same time have furnished her with a quite natural means of breaking with the Marchese Crescenzi. Once this mistake was made, how was she to resist this young man—so lovable, so natural, so tender—who was exposing his life to frightful perils to gain the simple pleasure of looking at her from one window to another? After five days of terrible struggles, interspersed with moments of self-contempt, Clelia made up her mind to reply to the letter in which Fabrizio begged for the pleasure of speaking to her in the black marble chapel. To tell the truth, she refused, and in distinctly firm language; but from that moment all peace of mind was lost for her; at every instant her imagination portrayed to her Fabrizio succumbing to the attack of the poisoner; she came six or eight times in a day to her aviary, she felt the passionate need of assuring herself with her own eyes that Fabrizio was alive.

"If he is still in the fortress," she told herself, "if he is exposed to all the horrors which the Raversi faction are

perhaps plotting against him with the object of getting rid of Conte Mosca, it is solely because I have had the cowardice not to fly to the convent! What excuse could he have for remaining here once he was certain that I had gone for ever?"

This girl, at once so timid and so proud, brought herself to the point of running the risk of a refusal on the part of the gaoler Grillo; what was more, she exposed herself to all the comments which the man might allow himself to make on the singularity of her conduct. She stooped to the degree of humiliation involved in sending for him, and telling him in a tremulous voice which betrayed her whole secret that within a few days Fabrizio was going to obtain his freedom, that the Duchessa Sanseverina, in the hope of this, was taking the most active measures, that often it was necessary to have without a moment's delay the prisoner's answer to certain proposals which might be made, and that she wished him, Grillo, to allow Fabrizio to make an opening in the screen which masked his window, so that she might communicate to him by signs the instructions which she received several times daily from Signora Sanseverina.

Grillo smiled and gave her an assurance of his respect and obedience. Clelia felt a boundless gratitude to him because he said nothing; it was evident that he knew quite well all that had been going on for the last few months.

Scarcely had the gaoler left her presence when Clelia made the signal by which she had arranged to call Fabrizio upon important occasions; she confessed to him all that she had just been doing. "You wish to perish by poison," she added: "I hope to have the courage, one of these days, to leave my father and escape to some remote convent. I shall be indebted to you for that; then I hope that you will no longer oppose the plans that may be

proposed to you for getting you away from here. So long as you are in prison, I have frightful and unreasonable moments; never in my life have I contributed to anyone's hurt, and I feel that I am to be the cause of your death. Such an idea in the case of a complete stranger would fill me with despair; judge of what I feel when I picture to myself that a friend, whose unreasonableness gives me serious cause for complaint, but whom, after all, I have been seeing every day for so long, is at this very moment a victim to the pangs of death. At times I feel the need to know from your own lips that you are alive.

"It was to escape from this frightful grief that I have just lowered myself so far as to ask a favour of a subordinate who might have refused it me, and may yet betray me. For that matter, I should perhaps be happy were he to come and denounce me to my father; at once I should leave for the convent, I should no longer be the most unwilling accomplice of your cruel folly. But, believe me, this cannot go on for long, you will obey the Duchessa's orders. Are you satisfied, cruel friend? It is I who am begging you to betray my father. Call Grillo, and give him a present."

Fabrizio was so deeply in love, the simplest expression of Clelia's wishes plunged him in such fear that even this strange communication gave him no certainty that he was loved. He summoned Grillo, whom he paid generously for his services in the past, and, as for the future, told him that for every day on which he allowed him to make use of the opening cut in the screen, he should receive a sequin. Grillo was delighted with these terms.

"I am going to speak to you with my hand on my heart, Monsignore; will you submit to eating your dinner cold every day? It is a very simple way of avoiding poison. But I ask you to use the utmost discretion; a

gaoler has to see everything and know nothing," and so on. "Instead of one dog, I shall have several, and you yourself will make them taste all the dishes that you propose to eat; as for wine, I will give you my own, and you will touch only the bottles from which I have drunk. But if Your Excellency wishes to ruin me for ever, he has merely got to repeat these details even to Signorina Clelia; women will always be women; if to-morrow she quarrels with you, the day after, to have her revenge, she will tell the whole story to her father, whose greatest joy would be to find an excuse for having a gaoler hanged. After Barbone, he is perhaps the wickedest creature in the fortress, and that is where the real danger of your position lies; he knows how to handle poison, you may be sure of that, and he would never forgive me this idea of having three or four little dogs."

There was another serenade. This time Grillo answered all Fabrizio's questions: he had indeed promised himself always to be prudent, and not to betray Signorina Clelia, who according to him, while on the point of marrying the Marchese Crescenzi, the richest man in the States of Parma, was nevertheless making love, so far as the prison walls allowed, to the charming Monsignore del Dongo. He had answered the latter's final questions as to the serenade, when he was fool enough to add: "They think that he will marry her soon." One may judge of the effect of this simple statement on Fabrizio.

That night he replied to the signals of the lamp only to say that he was ill. The following morning, at ten o'clock, Clelia having appeared in the aviary, he asked her in a tone of ceremonious politeness which was quite novel between them, why she had not told him frankly that she was in love with the Marchese Crescenzi, and that she was on the point of marrying him.

"Because there is not a word of truth in the story,"

replied Clelia with impatience. It is true, however, that the rest of her answer was less precise: Fabrizio pointed this out to her, and took advantage of it to repeat his request for a meeting. Clelia, seeing a doubt cast on her sincerity, granted his request almost at once, reminding him at the same time that she was dishonouring herself for ever in Grillo's eyes. That evening, when it was quite dark, she appeared, accompanied by her maid, in the black marble chapel; she stopped in the middle, by the sanctuary lamp; the maid and Grillo retired thirty paces towards the door. Clelia, who was trembling all over, had prepared a fine speech: her object was to make no compromising admission, but the logic of passion is insistent; the profound interest which it feels in knowing the truth does not allow it to keep up vain pretences, while at the same time the extreme devotion that it feels to the object of its love takes from it the fear of giving offence. Fabrizio was dazzled at first by Clelia's beauty; for nearly eight months he had seen no one at such close range except gaolers. But the name of the Marchese Crescenzi revived all his fury, it increased when he saw quite clearly that Clelia was answering him only with tactful circumspection; Clelia herself realised that she was increasing his suspicions instead of dissipating them. This sensation was too cruel for her to bear.

"Will you be really glad," she said to him with a sort of anger and with tears in her eyes, "to have made me exceed all the bounds of what I owe to myself? Until the third of August last year I had never felt anything but aversion towards the men who sought to attract me. I had a boundless and probably exaggerated contempt for the character of the courtier, everyone who flourished at that court revolted me. I found, on the other hand, singular qualities in a prisoner who, on the third of August, was brought to this citadel. I felt, without no-

ticing them at first, all the torments of jealousy. The attractions of a charming woman, and one whom I knew well, were like daggers thrust into my heart, because I believed, and I am still inclined to believe that this prisoner was attached to her. Presently the persecutions of the Marchese Crescenzi, who had sought my hand, were redoubled; he is extremely rich, and we have no fortune. I was rejecting them with the greatest boldness when my father uttered the fatal word convent; I realised that, if I left the citadel, I would no longer be able to watch over the life of the prisoner in whose fate I was interested. The triumph of my precautions had been that until that moment he had not the slightest suspicion of the appalling dangers that were threatening his life. I had promised myself never to betray either my father or my secret; but that woman of an admirable activity, a superior intelligence, a terrible will, who is protecting this prisoner, offered him, or so I suppose, means of escape: he rejected them, and sought to persuade me that he was refusing to leave the citadel in order not to be separated from me. Then I made a great mistake, I fought with myself for five days; I ought at once to have fled to the convent and to have left the fortress: that course offered me a very simple method of breaking with the Marchese Crescenzi. I had not the courage to leave the fortress, and I am a ruined girl: I have attached myself to a fickle man: I know what his conduct was at Naples; and what reason should I have to believe that his character has altered? Shut up in a harsh prison, he has paid his court to the one woman he could see; she has been a distraction from the dulness of his life. As he could speak to her only with a certain amount of difficulty, this amusement has assumed the false appearance of a passion. This prisoner, having made a name for himself in the world by his courage, imagines himself to be proving that

his love is something more than a passing fancy by exposing himself to considerable dangers in order to continue to see the person whom he thinks that he loves. But as soon as he is in a big town, surrounded once more by the seductions of society, he will once more become what he has always been, a man of the world given to dissipation, to gallantry; and his poor prison companion will end her days in a convent, forgotten by this light-hearted creature, and with the undying regret that she has made him an avowal."

This historic speech, of which we give only the principal points, was, as one may imagine, interrupted a score of times by Fabrizio. He was desperately in love; also he was perfectly convinced that he had never loved before seeing Clelia, and that the destiny of his life was to live for her alone.

The reader will no doubt imagine the fine speeches that he was making when the maid warned her mistress that half past eleven had struck, and that the General might return at any moment; the parting was cruel.

"I am seeing you perhaps for the last time," said Clelia to the prisoner: "a proceeding which is evidently in the interest of the Raversi cabal may furnish you with a cruel fashion of proving that you are not inconstant." Clelia parted from Fabrizio choked by her sobs and dying with shame at not being able to hide them entirely from her maid, nor, what was worse, from the gaoler Grillo. A second conversation was possible only when the General should announce his intention of spending an evening in society: and as, since Fabrizio's imprisonment, and the interest which it inspired in the curious courtiers, he had found it prudent to afflict himself with an almost continuous attack of gout, his excursions to the town, subjected to the requirements of an astute policy, were decided upon

often only at the moment of his getting into the carriage.

After this evening in the marble chapel, Fabrizio's life was a succession of transports of joy. Serious obstacles, it was true, seemed still to stand in the way of his happiness; but now at last he had that supreme and scarcely hoped-for joy of being loved by the divine creature who occupied all his thoughts.

On the third evening after this conversation, the signals from the lamp finished quite early, almost at midnight; at the moment of their coming to an end Fabrizio almost had his skull broken by a huge ball of lead which, thrown over the top of the screen of his window, came crashing through its paper panes and fell into his room.

This huge ball was not nearly so heavy as appeared from its size. Fabrizio easily succeeded in opening it, and found inside a letter from the Duchessa. By the intervention of the Archbishop, to whom she paid scrupulous attention, she had won over to her side a soldier in the garrison of the citadel. This man, a skilled slinger, had eluded the sentries posted at the corners and outside the door of the governor's *palazzo,* or had come to terms with them.

"You must escape with cords: I shudder as I give you this strange advice, I have been hesitating, for two whole months and more, to tell you this; but the official outlook grows darker every day, and one must be prepared for the worst. This being so, start signalling again at once with your lamp, to shew us that you have received this letter; send *P—B—G alla Monaca,* that is four, three and two: I shall not breathe until I have seen this signal. I am on the tower, we shall answer *N—O,* that is seven and five.

On receiving the answer send no other signal, and attend to nothing but the meaning of my letter."

Fabrizio made haste to obey and sent the arranged signals, which were followed by the promised reply; then he went on reading the letter:

"We may be prepared for the worst; so I have been told by the three men in whom I have the greatest confidence, after I had made them swear on the Gospel that they would tell me the truth, however cruel it might be to me. The first of these men threatened the surgeon who betrayed you at Ferrara that he would fall upon him with an open knife in his hand; the second told you, on your return from Belgirate, that it would have been more strictly prudent to take your pistol and shoot the footman who came singing through the wood leading a fine horse, but a trifle thin; you do not know the third: he is a highway robber of my acquaintance, a man of action if ever there was one, and as full of courage as yourself; that is chiefly why I asked him to tell me what you ought to do. All three of them assured me, without knowing, any of them, that I was consulting the other two, that it was better to risk breaking your neck than to spend eleven years and four months in the continual fear of a highly probable poison.

"You must for the next month practise in your cell climbing up and down on a knotted cord. Then, on the night of some *festa* when the garrison of the citadel will have received an extra ration of wine, you will make the great attempt; you shall have three cords of silk and canvas, of the thickness of a swan's quill, the first of eighty feet to come down the thirty-five feet from the window to the orange trees; the

second of three hundred feet, and that is where the difficulty will be on account of the weight, to come down the hundred and eighty feet which is the height of the wall of the great tower; a third of thirty feet will help you to climb down the rampart. I spend my life studying the great wall from the east, that is from the direction of Ferrara: a gap due to an earthquake has been filled by means of a buttress which forms an *inclined plane*. My highway robber assures me that he would undertake to climb down on that side without any great difficulty and at the risk only of a few scratches, by letting himself slide along the inclined plane formed by this buttress. The vertical drop is no more than twenty-eight feet, right at the bottom: that side is the least carefully guarded.

"However, all things considered, my robber, who has escaped three times from prison, and whom you would love if you knew him, though he abominates people of your class; my highway robber, I say, as agile and nimble as yourself, thinks that he would rather come down on the west side, exactly opposite the little *palazzo* formerly occupied by Fausta, which you know well. What would make him choose that side is that the wall, although very slightly inclined, is covered almost all the way down with shrubs; there are twigs on it, as thick as your little finger, which may easily scratch you if you do not take care, but are also excellent things to hold on to. Only this morning I examined this west side with an excellent telescope: the place to choose is precisely beneath a new stone which was fixed in the parapet two or three years ago. Directly beneath this stone you will find first of all a bare space of some twenty feet; you must go very slowly down this (you can imagine how my

heart shudders in giving you these terrible instructions, but courage consists in knowing how to choose the lesser evil, frightful as it may be); after the bare space, you will find eighty or ninety feet of quite big shrubs, out of which one can see birds flying, then a space of thirty feet where there is nothing but grass, wall-flowers and creepers. Then, as you come near the ground, twenty feet of shrubs, and last of all twenty-five or thirty feet recently plastered.

"What would make me choose this side is that there, directly underneath the new stone in the parapet on top, there is a wooden hut built by a soldier in his garden, which the engineer captain employed at the fortress is trying to force him to pull down; it is seventeen feet high, and is roofed with thatch, and the roof touches the great wall of the citadel. It is this roof that tempts me; in the dreadful event of an accident, it would break your fall. Once you have reached this point, you are within the circle of the ramparts, which are none too carefully guarded; if they arrest you there, fire your pistol and put up a fight for a few minutes. Your friend of Ferrara and another stout-hearted man, he whom I call the highway robber, will have ladders, and will not hesitate to scale this quite low rampart, and fly to your rescue.

"The rampart is only twenty-three feet high, and is built on an easy slope. I shall be at the foot of this last wall with a good number of armed men.

"I hope to be able to send you five or six letters by the same channel as this. I shall continue to repeat the same things in different words, so that we may fully understand one another. You can guess with what feelings I tell you that the man who said: *'Shoot the footman,'* who, after all, is the best of men, and is dying of compunction, thinks that you

will get away with a broken arm. The highway robber, who has a wider experience of this sort of expedition, thinks that, if you will climb down very carefully, and, above all, without hurrying, your liberty need cost you only a few scratches. The great difficulty is to supply the cords; and this is what has been occupying my whole mind during the last fortnight, in which this great idea has taken up all my time.

"I make no answer to that mad signal, the only stupid thing you have ever said in your life: 'I do not wish to escape!' The man who said: 'Shoot the footman,' exclaimed that boredom had driven you mad. I shall not attempt to hide from you that we fear a very imminent danger, which will perhaps hasten the day of your flight. To warn you of this danger, the lamp will signal several times in succession:

*The castle has taken fire.*

You will reply:

*Are my books burned?"*

This letter contained five or six pages more of details; it was written in a microscopic hand on the thinnest paper.

"All that is very fine and very well thought out," Fabrizio said to himself; "I owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the Conte and the Duchessa; they will think perhaps that I am afraid, but I shall not try to escape. Did anyone ever escape from a place where he was at the height of happiness, to go and cast himself into a horrible exile where everything would be lacking, including air to breathe? What should I do after a month at Florence? I should put on a disguise to come and prowl round the gate of this fortress, and try to intercept a glance!"

Next day Fabrizio had an alarm; he was at his win-

dow, about eleven o'clock, admiring the magnificent view and awaiting the happy moment when he should see Clelia, when Grillo came breathless into his cell:

"Quick, quick, Monsignore! Fling yourself on your bed, pretend to be ill; there are three judges coming up! They are going to question you: think well before you speak; they have come to *entangle* you."

So saying, Grillo made haste to shut the little trap in the screen, thrust Fabrizio on to his bed and piled two or three cloaks on top of him.

"Tell them that you are very ill, and don't say much; above all make them repeat their questions, so as to have time to think."

The three judges entered. "Three escaped gaolbirds," thought Fabrizio on seeing their vile faces, "not three judges." They wore long black gowns. They bowed gravely and took possession, without saying a word, of the three chairs that were in the room.

"Signor Fabrizio del Dongo," said the eldest of the three, "we are pained by the sad duty which we have come to you to perform. We are here to announce to you the decease of His Excellency the Signor Marchese del Dongo, your father, Second Grand Majordomo Major of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, Knight Grand Cross of the Orders of ——" a string of titles followed. Fabrizio burst into tears. The judge went on:

"The Signora Marchesa del Dongo, your mother, informs you of this event by a letter missive; but as she has added to the fact certain improper reflexions, by a decree issued yesterday, the Court of Justice has decided that her letter shall be communicated to you only by extract, and it is this extract which the Recorder Bona is now going to read to you."

This reading finished, the judge came across to Fabrizio, who was still lying down, and made him follow

on his mother's letter the passages of which copies had been read to him. Fabrizio saw in the letter the words *unjust imprisonment, cruel punishment for a crime which is no crime at all,* and understood what had inspired the judges' visit. However, in his contempt for magistrates without honour, he did not actually say to them any more than:

"I am ill, gentlemen, I am dying of weakness, and you will excuse me if I do not rise."

When the judges had gone, Fabrizio wept again copiously, then said to himself: "Am I a hypocrite? I used to think that I did not love him at all."

On that day and the days that followed Clelia was very sad; she called him several times, but had barely the courage to say a few words. On the morning of the fifth day after their first meeting, she told him that she would come that evening to the marble chapel.

"I can only say a few words to you," she told him as she entered. She trembled so much that she had to lean on her maid. After sending the woman to wait at the chapel door: "You are going to give me your word of honour," she went on in a voice that was barely audible, "you are going to give me your word of honour that you will obey the Duchessa, and will attempt to escape on the day when she orders you and in the way that she will indicate to you, or else to-morrow morning I fly to a convent, and I swear to you here and now that never in my life will I utter a word to you again."

Fabrizio remained silent.

"Promise," said Clelia, the tears starting to her eyes and apparently quite beside herself, "or else we converse here for the last time. The life you have made me lead is intolerable: you are here on my account, and each day is perhaps the last of your existence." At this stage Clelia became so weak that she was obliged to seek the

support of an enormous armchair that had originally stood in the middle of the chapel, for the use of the prisoner-prince; she was almost fainting.

"What must I promise?" asked Fabrizio with a beaten air.

"You know."

"I swear then to cast myself deliberately into a terrible disaster, and to condemn myself to live far from all that I love in the world."

"Make a definite promise."

"I swear to obey the Duchessa and to make my escape on the day she wishes and as she wishes. And what is to become of me once I am parted from you?"

"Swear to escape, whatever may happen to you."

"What! Have you made up your mind to marry the Marchese Crescenzi as soon as I am no longer here?"

"Oh, heavens! What sort of heart do you think I have? . . . But swear, or I shall not have another moment's peace."

"Very well, I swear to escape from here on the day on which Signora Sanseverina shall order me to do so, and whatever may happen to me between now and then."

This oath obtained, Clelia became so faint that she was obliged to retire after thanking Fabrizio.

"Everything was in readiness for my flight to-morrow morning," she told him, "had you persisted in refusing. I should have beheld you at this moment for the last time in my life, I had vowed that to the Madonna. Now, as soon as I can leave my room, I shall go and examine the terrible wall beneath the new stone in the parapet."

On the following day he found her so pale that he was keenly distressed. She said to him from the aviary window:

"Let us be under no illusion, my dear friend; as there is sin in our friendship, I have no doubt that misfortune

will come to us. You will be discovered while seeking to make your escape, and ruined for ever, if it is no worse; however, we must satisfy the demands of human prudence, it orders us to leave nothing untried. You will need, to climb down the outside of the great tower, a strong cord more than two hundred feet long. In spite of all the efforts I have made since I learned of the Duchessa's plan, I have only been able to procure cords that together amount to barely fifty feet. By a standing order of the governor, all cords that may be seen in the fortress are burned, and every evening they remove the well-ropes, which for that matter are so frail that they often break when drawing up the light weight attached to them. But pray God to forgive me, I am betraying my father, and working, unnatural girl that I am, to cause him undying grief. Pray to God for me, and, if your life is saved, make a vow to consecrate every moment of it to His Glory.

"This is an idea that has come to me: in a week from now I shall leave the citadel to be present at the wedding of one of the Marchese Crescenzi's sisters. I shall come back that night, as I must, but I shall try in every possible way not to come in until very late, and perhaps Barbone will not dare to examine me too closely. All the greatest ladies of the court will be at this wedding of the Marchese's sister, and no doubt Signora Sanseverina among them. In heaven's name, make one of these ladies give me a parcel of cords tightly packed, not too large, and reduced to the smallest possible bulk. Were I to expose myself to a thousand deaths I shall employ every means, even the most dangerous, to introduce this parcel of cords into the citadel, in defiance, alas, of all my duties. If my father comes to hear of it, I shall never see you again; but whatever may be the fate that

is in store for me, I shall be happy within the bounds of a sisterly friendship if I can help to save you."

That same evening, by their nocturnal correspondence with the lamps, Fabrizio gave the Duchessa warning of the unique opportunity that would shortly arise of conveying into the citadel a sufficient length of cord. But he begged her to keep this secret even from the Conte, which seemed to her odd. "He is mad," thought the Duchessa, "prison has altered him, he is taking things in a tragic spirit." Next day a ball of lead, thrown by the slinger, brought the prisoner news of the greatest possible peril; the person who undertook to convey the cords, he was told, would be literally saving his life. Fabrizio hastened to give this news to Clelia. This leaden ball brought him also a very careful drawing of the western wall by which he was to climb down from the top of the great tower into the space enclosed within the bastions; from this point it was then quite easy to escape, the ramparts being, as we know, only twenty-three feet in height. On the back of the plan was written in an exquisite hand a magnificent sonnet: a generous soul exhorted Fabrizio to take flight, and not to allow his soul to be debased and his body destroyed by the eleven years of captivity which he had still to undergo.

At this point a detail which is essential and will explain in part the courage that the Duchessa had found to recommend to Fabrizio so dangerous a flight, obliges us to interrupt for a moment the history of this bold enterprise.

Like all parties which are not in power, the Raversi party was not closely united. Cavaliere Riscara detested the Fiscal Rassi, whom he accused of having made him lose an important suit in which, as a matter of fact, he, Riscara, had been in the wrong. From Riscara the Prince received an anonymous message informing him

that a copy of Fabrizio's sentence had been officially addressed to the governor of the citadel. The Marchesa Raversi, that skilled party leader, was extremely annoyed by this false move, and at once sent word of it to her friend the Fiscal General; she found it quite natural that he should have wished to secure something from the Minister Mosca while Mosca remained in power. Rassi presented himself boldly at the Palace, thinking that he would get out of the scrape with a few kicks; the Prince could not dispense with a talented jurist, and Rassi had procured the banishment as Liberals of a judge and a barrister, the only two men in the country who could have taken his place.

The Prince, beside himself with rage, hurled insults at him and advanced upon him to strike him.

"Why, it is only a clerk's mistake," replied Rassi with the utmost coolness; "the procedure is laid down by the law, it should have been done the day after Signor del Dongo was confined in the citadel. The clerk in his zeal thought it had been forgotten, and must have made me sign the covering letter as a formality."

"And you expect to take me in with a clumsy lie like that?" cried the Prince in a fury; "why not confess that you have sold yourself to that rascal Mosca, and that this is why he gave you the Cross. But, by heaven, you shall not escape with a thrashing: I shall have you brought to justice, I shall disgrace you publicly."

"I defy you to bring me to justice," replied Rassi with assurance; he knew that this was a sure way of calming the Prince: "the law is on my side, and you have not a second Rassi to find you a way round it. You will not disgrace me, because there are moments when your nature is severe; you then feel a thirst for blood, but at the same time you seek to retain the esteem of reasonable Italians; that esteem is a *sine qua non* for your

ambition. And so you will recall me for the first act of severity of which your nature makes you feel the need, and as usual I shall procure you a quite regular sentence passed by timid judges who are fairly honest men, which will satisfy your passions. Find another man in your States as useful as myself!"

So saying, Rassi fled; he had got out of his scrape with a sharp reprimand and half-a-dozen kicks. On leaving the Palace he started for his estate of Riva; he had some fear of a dagger-thrust in the first impulse of anger, but had no doubt that within a fortnight a courier would summon him back to the capital. He employed the time which he spent in the country in organising a safe method of correspondence with Conte Mosca; he was madly in love with the title of Barone, and felt that the Prince made too much of that sublime thing, nobility, ever to confer it upon him; whereas the Conte, extremely proud of his own birth, respected nothing but nobility proved by titles anterior by the year 1400.

The Fiscal General had not been out in his forecast: he had been barely eight days on his estate when a friend of the Prince, who came there by chance, advised him to return to Parma without delay; the Prince received him with a laugh, then assumed a highly serious air, and made him swear on the Gospel that he would keep secret what was going to be confided to him. Rassi swore with great solemnity, and the Prince, his eye inflamed by hatred, cried that he would no longer be master in his own house so long as Fabrizio del Dongo was alive.

"I cannot," he went on, "either drive the Duchessa away or endure her presence; her eyes defy me and destroy my life."

Having allowed the Prince to explain himself at great length, Rassi, affecting extreme embarrassment, finally exclaimed:

"Your Highness shall be obeyed, of course, but the matter is one of a horrible difficulty: there is no possibility of condemning a del Dongo to death for the murder of a Giletti; it is already a masterly stroke to have made twelve years' imprisonment out of it. Besides, I suspect the Duchessa of having discovered three of the *contadini* who were employed on the excavations at Sanguigna, and were outside the trench at the moment when that brigand Giletti attacked del Dongo.

"And where are these witnesses?" said the Prince, irritated.

"Hiding in Piedmont, I suppose. It would require a conspiracy against Your Highness's life. . . ."

"There is a danger in that," said the Prince, "it makes people think of the reality."

"Well," said Rassi with a feint of innocence, "that is all my official arsenal."

"There remains poison. . . ."

"But who is to give it? Not that imbecile Conte?"

"From what one hears, it would not be his first attempt. . . ."

"He would have to be roused to anger first," Rassi went on; "and besides, when he made away with the captain he was not thirty, and he was in love, and infinitely less of a coward than he is in these days. No doubt, everything must give way to reasons of State; but, taken unawares like this and at first sight, I can see no one to carry out the Sovereign's orders but a certain Barbone, registry clerk in the prison, whom Signor del Dongo knocked down with a cuff in the face on the day of his admission there."

Once the Prince had been put at his ease, the conversation was endless; he brought it to a close by granting his Fiscal General a month in which to act; Rassi wished for two. Next day he received a secret present of a

thousand sequins. For three days he reflected; on the fourth he returned to his original conclusion, which seemed to him self-evident: "Conte Mosca alone will have the heart to keep his word to me, because, in making me a Barone, he does not give me anything that he respects; secondly, by warning him, I save myself probably from a crime for which I am more or less paid in advance; thirdly, I have my revenge for the first humiliating blows which Cavaliere Rassi has received." The following night he communicated to Conte Mosca the whole of his conversation with the Prince.

The Conte was secretly paying his court to the Duchessa; it is quite true that he still did not see her in her own house more than once or twice in a month, but almost every week, and whenever he managed to create an occasion for speaking of Fabrizio, the Duchessa, accompanied by Cecchina, would come, late in the evening, to spend a few moments in the Conte's gardens. She managed even to deceive her coachman, who was devoted to her, and believed her to be visiting a neighbouring house.

One may imagine whether the Conte, after receiving the Fiscal's terrible confidence, at once made the signal arranged between them to the Duchessa. Although it was the middle of the night, she begged him by Cecchina to come to her for a moment. The Conte, enraptured, lover-like, by this prospect of intimate converse, yet hesitated before telling the Duchessa everything. He was afraid of seeing her driven mad by grief.

After first seeking veiled words in which to mitigate the fatal announcement, he ended by telling her all; it was not in his power to keep a secret which she asked of him. In the last nine months her extreme misery had had a great influence on this ardent soul, this had fortified her courage, and she did not give way to sobs or lamenta-

tions. On the following evening she sent Fabrizio the signal of great danger:

*"The castle has taken fire."*

He made the appropriate reply:

*"Are my books burned?"*

The same night she was fortunate enough to have a letter conveyed to him in a leaden ball. It was a week after this that the marriage of the Marchese Crescenzi's sister was celebrated, when the Duchessa was guilty of an enormously rash action of which we shall give an account in its proper place.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

ALMOST a year before the time of these calamities the Duchessa had made a singular acquaintance: one day when she had the *luna,* as they say in those parts, she had gone suddenly, towards evening, to her villa of Sacca, situated on the farther side of Colorno, on the hill commanding the Po. She was amusing herself in improving this property; she loved the vast forest which crowned the hill and reached to the house; she spent her time laying out paths in picturesque directions.

"You will have yourself carried off by brigands, fair Duchessa," the Prince said to her one day; "it is impossible that a forest in which it is known that you take the air should remain deserted." The Prince threw a glance at the Conte, whose jealousy he hoped to quicken.

"I have no fear, Serene Highness," replied the Duchessa with an innocent air, "when I go walking in my woods; I reassure myself with this thought: I have done no harm to anyone, who is there that could hate me?" This speech was considered daring, it recalled the insults offered by the Liberals of the country, who were most insolent people.

On the day of the walk in question, the Prince's words came back to the mind of the Duchessa as she observed a very ill dressed man who was following her at a distance through the wood. At a sudden turn which she took in the course of her walk, this person came so near her that she felt alarmed. Her first impulse was to call her gamekeeper whom she had left half a mile away, in the flower-

garden close to the house. The stranger had time to overtake her and fling himself at her feet. He was young, extremely good-looking, but horribly badly dressed; his clothes had rents in them a foot long, but his eyes burned with the fire of an ardent soul.

"I am under sentence of death, I am the physician, Ferrante Palla, I am dying of hunger, I and my five children."

The Duchessa had noticed that he was terribly thin; but his eyes were so fine, and filled with so tender an exaltation that they took from him any suggestion of crime. "Pallagi," she thought, "might well have given eyes like those to the Saint John in the Desert he has just placed in the Cathedral." The idea of Saint John was suggested to her by the incredible thinness of the vagabond. The Duchessa gave him three sequins which she had in her purse, with an apology for offering him so little, because she had just paid her gardener's account. Ferrante thanked her effusively. "Alas!" he said to her, "once I lived in towns, I used to see beautiful women; now that in fulfilment of my duties as a citizen I have had myself sentenced to death, I live in the woods, and I was following you, not to demand alms of you nor to rob you, but like a savage fascinated by an angelic beauty. It is so long since I last saw a pair of lovely white hands."

"Rise, then," the Duchessa told him; for he had remained on his knees.

"Allow me to remain like this," said Ferrante; "this posture proves to me that I am not for the present engaged in robbery, and that soothes me; for you must know that I steal to live, now that I am prevented from practising my profession. But at this moment I am only a simple mortal who is adoring sublime beauty." The Duchessa gathered that he was slightly mad, but she was not at all afraid; she saw in the eyes of the man that he

had a good and ardent soul, and besides she had no objection to extraordinary physiognomies.

"I am a physician, then, and I was making love to the wife of the apothecary Sarasine of Parma: he took us by surprise and drove us from the house, with three children whom he supposed, and rightly, to be mine and not his. I have had two since then. The mother and five children are living in the direst poverty in a sort of hut which I built with my own hands a league from here, in the wood. For I have to keep away from the police, and the poor woman refuses to be parted from me. I was sentenced to death, and quite justly; I was conspiring. I abominate the Prince, who is a tyrant. I did not fly the country, for want of money. My misfortunes have greatly increased, and I ought to have killed myself a thousand times over; I no longer love the unhappy woman who has borne me these five children and has ruined herself for me; I love another. But if I kill myself, the five children will literally starve to death." The man spoke with an accent of sincerity.

"But how do you live?" inquired the Duchessa, moved to compassion.

"The children's mother spins; the eldest girl is kept in a farm by some Liberals, where she tends the sheep; I am a highwayman on the road between Piacenza and Genoa."

"How do you harmonise highway robbery with your Liberal principles?"

"I keep a note of the people I rob, and if ever I have anything I shall restore to them the sums I have taken. I consider that a Tribune of the People like myself is performing work which, in view of its danger, is well worth a hundred francs monthly; and so I am careful not to take more than twelve hundred francs in a year.

"No, I am wrong, I steal a small sum in addition, for in

that way I am able to meet the cost of printing my works."

"What works?"

*"Is —— ever to have a Chamber and a Budget?"*

"What," said the Duchessa in amazement, "it is you, Sir, who are one of the greatest poets of the age, the famous Ferrante Palla?"

"Famous perhaps, but most unfortunate; that is certain."

"And a man of your talent, Sir, is obliged to steal in order to live?"

"That is perhaps the calling for which I have some talent. Hitherto all our authors who have made themselves famous have been men paid by the government or the religion that they sought to undermine. I, in the first place, risk my life; in the second place, think, Signora, of the reflexions that disturb my mind when I go out to rob! Am I in the right, I ask myself. Does the office of Tribune render services that are really worth a hundred francs a month? I have two shirts, the coat in which you see me, a few worthless weapons, and I am sure to end by the rope; I venture to think that I am disinterested. I should be happy but for this fatal love which allows me to find only misery now in the company of the mother of my children. Poverty weighs upon me because it is ugly: I like fine clothes, white hands. . . ."

He looked at the Duchessa's in such a fashion that fear seized hold of her.

"Good-bye, Sir," she said to him: "can I be of any service to you in Parma?"

"Think sometimes of this question: his task is to awaken men's hearts and to prevent them from falling asleep in that false and wholly material happiness which is given by monarchies. Is the service that he renders to his fellow-citizens worth a hundred francs a month? . . . My

misfortune is that I am in love," he said in the gentlest of tones, "and for nearly two years my heart has been occupied by you alone, but until now I have seen you without alarming you." And he took to his heels with a prodigious swiftness which astonished the Duchessa and reassured her. "The police would have hard work to catch him," she thought; "he must be mad, after all."

"He is mad," her servants informed her; "we have all known for a long time that the poor man was in love with the Signora; when the Signora is here we see him wandering in the highest parts of the woods, and as soon as the Signora has gone he never fails to come and sit in the very places where she has rested; he is careful to pick up any flowers that may have dropped from her nosegay and keeps them for a long time fastened in his battered hat."

"And you have never spoken to me of these eccentricities," said the Duchessa, almost in a tone of reproach.

"We were afraid that the Signora might tell the Minister Mosca. Poor Ferrante is such a good fellow! He has never done harm to anyone, and because he loves our Napoleon they have sentenced him to death."

She said no word to the Minister of this meeting, and, as in four years it was the first secret that she had kept from him, a dozen times she was obliged to stop short in the middle of a sentence. She returned to Sacca with a store of gold. Ferrante shewed no sign of life. She came again a fortnight later: Ferrante, after following her for some time, bounding through the wood at a distance of a hundred yards, fell upon her with the swiftness of a hawk, and flung himself at her feet as on the former occasion.

"Where were you a fortnight ago?"

"In the mountains, beyond Novi, robbing the muleteers who were returning from Mjlan where they had been selling oil."

"Take this purse."

Ferrante opened the purse, took from it a sequin which he kissed and thrust into his bosom, then handed it back to her.

"You give me back this purse, and you are a robber!"

"Certainly; my rule is that I must never possess more than a hundred francs; now, at this moment, the mother of my children has eighty francs, and I have twenty-five; I am five francs to the bad, and if they were to hang me now I should feel remorse. I have taken this sequin because it comes from you and I love you."

The intonation of this very simple speech was perfect. "He does really love," the Duchessa said to herself.

That day he appeared quite distracted. He said that there were in Parma people who owed him six hundred francs, and that with that sum he could repair his hut in which now his poor children were catching cold.

"But I will make you a loan of those six hundred francs," said the Duchessa, genuinely moved.

"But then I, a public man—will not the opposite party have a chance to slander me, and say that I am selling myself?"

The Duchessa, in compassion, offered him a hiding-place in Parma if he would swear that for the time being he would not exercise his magistrature in that city, and above all would not carry out any of those sentences of death which, he said, he had *in petto*.

"And if they hang me, as a result of my rashness," said Ferrante gravely, "all those scoundrels, who are so obnoxious to the People, will live for long years to come, and by whose fault? What will my father say to me when he greets me up above?"

The Duchessa spoke to him at length of his young children, to whom the damp might give fatal illnesses;

he ended by accepting the offer of the hiding place in Parma.

The Duca Sanseverina, during the solitary half-day which he had spent in Parma after his marriage, had shewn the Duchessa a highly singular hiding place which exists in the southern corner of the *palazzo* of that name. The wall in front, which dates from the middle ages, is eight feet thick; it has been hollowed out inside, so as to provide a secret chamber twenty feet in height but only two in width. It is close to where the visitor admires the reservoir mentioned in all the accounts of travels, a famous work of the twelfth century, constructed at the time of the siege of Parma by the Emperor Sigismund, and afterwards enclosed within the walls of the *palazzo* Sanseverina.

One enters the hiding place by turning an enormous stone on an iron axis which runs through the middle of the block. The Duchessa was so profoundly touched by Ferrante's madness and by the hard lot of his children, for whom he obstinately refused every present of any value, that she allowed him to make use of this hiding place for a considerable time. She saw him again a month later, still in the woods of Sacca, and as on this occasion he was a little more calm, he recited to her one of his sonnets which seemed to her equal if not superior to any of the finest work written in Italy in the last two centuries. Ferrante obtained several interviews; but his love grew exalted, became importunate, and the Duchessa perceived that this passion was obeying the laws of all love-affairs in which one conceives the possibility of a ray of hope. She sent him back to the woods, forbade him to speak to her again: he obeyed immediately and with a perfect docility. Things had reached this point when Fabrizio was arrested. Three days later, at nightfall, a Capuchin presented himself at the door of the *palazzo* Sanseverina; he had, he said, an important secret to com-

municate to the lady of the house. She was so wretched that she had him admitted: it was Ferrante. "There is happening here a fresh iniquity of which the Tribune of the people ought to take cognisance," this man mad with love said to her. "On the other hand, acting as a private citizen," he added, "I can give the Signora Duchessa Sanseverina nothing but my life, and I lay it before her."

So sincere a devotion on the part of a robber and madman touched the Duchessa keenly. She talked for some time to this man who was considered the greatest poet in the North of Italy, and wept freely. "Here is a man who understands my heart," she said to herself. The following day he reappeared, again at the *Ave Maria,* disguised as a servant and wearing livery.

"I have not left Parma: I have heard tell of an atrocity which my lips shall not repeat; but here I am. Think, Signora, of what you are refusing! The being you see before you is not a doll of the court, he is a man!" He was on his knees as he uttered these words with an air which made them tell. "Yesterday I said to myself," he went on: "She has wept in my presence; therefore she is a little less unhappy."

"But, Sir, think of the dangers that surround you, you will be arrested in this town!"

"The Tribune will say to you: Signora, what is life when duty calls? The unhappy man, who has the grief of no longer feeling any passion for virtue now that he is burning with love, will add: Signora Duchessa, Fabrizio, a man of feeling, is perhaps about to perish, do not repulse another man of feeling who offers himself to you! Here is a body of iron and a heart which fears nothing in the world but your displeasure."

"If you speak to me again of your feelings, I close my door to you for ever."

It occurred to the Duchessa, that evening, to announce

to Ferrante that she would make a small allowance to his children, but she was afraid that he would go straight from the house and kill himself.

No sooner had he left her than, filled with gloomy presentiments, she said to herself: "I too, I may die, and would to God I might, and that soon! If I found a man worthy of the name to whom to commend my poor Fabrizio."

An idea struck the Duchessa: she took a sheet of paper and drafted an acknowledgment, into which she introduced the few legal terms that she knew, that she had received from Signor Ferrante Palla the sum of 25,000 francs, on the express condition of paying every year a life-rent of 1,500 francs to Signora Sarasine and her five children. The Duchessa added: "In addition, I bequeath a life-rent of 300 francs to each of these five children, on condition that Ferrante Palla gives his professional services as a physician to my nephew Fabrizio del Dongo, and behaves to him as a brother. This I request him to do." She signed the document, ante-dated it by a year and folded the sheet.

Two days later, Ferrante reappeared. It was at the moment when the town was agitated by the rumour of the immediate execution of Fabrizio. Would this grim ceremony take place in the citadel, or under the trees of the public mall? Many of the populace took a walk that evening past the gate of the citadel, trying to see whether the scaffold were being erected; this spectacle had moved Ferrante. He found the Duchessa in floods of tears and unable to speak; she greeted him with her hand and pointed to a seat. Ferrante, disguised that day as a Capuchin, was superb; instead of seating himself he knelt, and prayed devoutly in an undertone. At a moment when the Duchessa seemed slightly more calm, without stirring from

his posture, he broke off his prayer for an instant to say these words: "Once again he offers his life."

"Think of what you are saying," cried the Duchessa, with that haggard eye which, following tears, indicates that anger is overcoming emotion.

"He offers his life to place an obstacle in the way of Fabrizio's fate, or to avenge it."

"There are circumstances," replied the Duchessa, "in which I could accept the sacrifice of your life."

She gazed at him with a severe attention. A ray of joy gleamed in his eye; he rose swiftly and stretched out his arms towards heaven. The Duchessa went to find a paper hidden in the secret drawer of a walnut cabinet.

"Read this," she said to Ferrante. It was the deed in favour of his children, of which we have spoken.

Tears and sobs prevented Ferrante from reading it to the end; he fell on his knees.

"Give me back the paper," said the Duchessa, and, in his presence, burned it in the flame of a candle.

"My name," she explained, "must not appear if you are taken and executed, for your life will be at stake."

"My joy is to die in harming the tyrant: a far greater joy is to die for you. Once this is stated and clearly understood, be so kind as to make no further mention of this detail of money. I might see in it a suspicion that would be injurious to me."

"If you are compromised, I may be also," replied the Duchessa, "and Fabrizio as well as myself: it is for that reason, and not because I have any doubt of your bravery, that I require that the man who is lacerating my heart shall be poisoned and not stabbed. For the same reason which is so important to me, I order you to do everything in the world to save your own life."

"I shall execute the task faithfully, punctiliously and prudently. I foresee, Signora Duchessa, that my revenge

will be combined with your own: were it not so, I should still obey you faithfully, punctiliously and prudently. I may not succeed, but I shall employ all my human strength."

"It is a question of poisoning Fabrizio's murderer."

"So I had guessed, and, during the twenty-seven months in which I have been leading this vagabond and abominable life, I have often thought of a similar action on my own account."

"If I am discovered and condemned as an accomplice," went on the Duchessa in a tone of pride, "I do not wish the charge to be imputed to me of having corrupted you. I order you to make no further attempt to see me until the time comes for our revenge: he must on no account be put to death before I have given you the signal. His death at the present moment, for instance, would be lamentable to me instead of being useful. Probably his death will occur only in several months' time, but it shall occur. I insist on his dying by poison, and I should prefer to leave him alive rather than see him shot. For considerations which I do not wish to explain to you, I insist upon your life's being saved."

Ferrante was delighted with the tone of authority which the Duchessa adopted with him: his eyes gleamed with a profound joy. As we have said, he was horribly thin; but one could see that he had been very handsome in his youth, and he imagined himself to be still what he had once been. "Am I mad?" he asked himself; "or will the Duchessa indeed one day, when I have given her this proof of my devotion, make me the happiest of men? And, when it comes to that, why not? Am I not worth as much as that doll of a Conte Mosca, who when the time came, could do nothing for her, not even enable Monsignor Fabrizio to escape?"

"I may wish his death to-morrow," the Duchessa con-

tinued, still with the same air of authority. "You know that immense reservoir of water which is at the corner of the *palazzo,* not far from the hiding-place which you have sometimes occupied; there is a secret way of letting all that water run out into the street: very well, that will be the signal for my revenge. You will see, if you are in Parma, or you will hear it said, if you are living in the woods, that the great reservoir of the *palazzo* Sanseverina has burst. Act at once but by poison, and above all risk your own life as little as possible. No one must ever know that I have had a hand in this affair."

"Words are useless," replied Ferrante, with an enthusiasm which he could ill conceal: "I have already fixed on the means which I shall employ. The life of that man has become more odious to me than it was before, since I shall not dare to see you again so long as he is alive. I shall await the signal of the reservoir flooding the street." He bowed abruptly and left the room. The Duchessa watched him go.

When he was in the next room, she recalled him.

"Ferrante!" she cried; "sublime man!"

He returned, as though impatient at being detained: his face at that moment was superb.

"And your children?"

"Signora, they will be richer than I; you will perhaps allow them some small pension."

"Wait," said the Duchessa as she handed him a sort of large case of olive wood, here are all the diamonds that I have left: they are worth 50,000 francs."

"Ah! Signora, you humiliate me!" said Ferrante with a gesture of horror; and his face completely altered.

"I shall not see you again before the deed: take them, I wish it," added the Duchessa with an air of pride which struck Ferrante dumb; he put the case in his pocket and left her.

The door had closed behind him. The Duchessa called him back once again; he returned with an uneasy air: the Duchessa was standing in the middle of the room; she threw herself into his arms. A moment later, Ferrante had almost fainted with happiness; the Duchessa released herself from his embrace, and with her eyes shewed him the door.

"There goes the one man who has understood me," she said to herself; "that is how Fabrizio would have acted, if he could have realised."

There were two salient points in the Duchessa's character: she always wished what she had once wished; she never gave any further consideration to what had once been decided. She used to quote in this connexion a saying of her first husband, the charming General Pietranera. "What insolence to myself!" he used to say; "Why should I suppose that I have more sense to-day than when I made up my mind?"

From that moment a sort of gaiety reappeared in the Duchessa's character. Before the fatal resolution, at each step that her mind took, at each new point that she saw, she had the feeling of her own inferiority to the Prince, of her weakness and gullibility; the Prince, according to her, had basely betrayed her, and Conte Mosca, as was natural to his courtier's spirit, albeit innocently, had supported the Prince. Once her revenge was settled, she felt her strength, every step that her mind took gave her happiness. I am inclined to think that the immoral happiness which the Italians find in revenge is due to the strength of their imagination; the people of other countries do not properly speaking forgive; they forget.

The Duchessa did not see Palla again until the last days of Fabrizio's imprisonment. As the reader may perhaps have guessed, it was he who gave her the idea of his escape: there was in the woods, two leagues from Sacca,

a mediæval tower, half in ruins, and more than a hundred feet high; before speaking a second time to the Duchessa of an escape, Ferrante begged her to send Lodovico with a party of trustworthy men, to fasten a set of ladders against this tower. In the Duchessa's presence he climbed up by means of the ladders and down with an ordinary knotted cord; he repeated the experiment three times, then explained his idea again. A week later Lodovico too was prepared to climb down this old tower with a knotted cord; it was then that the Duchessa communicated the idea to Fabrizio.

In the final days before this attempt, which might lead to the death of the prisoner, and in more ways than one, the Duchessa could not secure a moment's rest unless she had Ferrante by her side; the courage of this man electrified her own; but it can be understood that she had to hide from the Conte this singular companionship. She was afraid, not that he would be revolted, but she would have been afflicted by his objections, which would have increased her uneasiness. "What! Take as an intimate adviser a madman known to be mad, and under sentence of death! And," added the Duchessa, speaking to herself, "a man who, in consequence, might do such strange things!" Ferrante happened to be in the Duchessa's drawing-room at the moment when the Conte came to give her a report of the Prince's conversation with Rassi; and, when the Conte had left her, she had great difficulty in preventing Ferrante from going straight away to the execution of a frightful plan.

"I am strong now," cried this madman; "I have no longer any doubt as to the lawfulness of the act!"

"But, in the moment of indignation which must inevitably follow, Fabrizio would be put to death!"

"Yes, but in that way we should spare him the danger

of the climb: it is possible, indeed easy," he added; "but the young man lacks experience."

The marriage was celebrated of the Marchese Crescenzi's sister, and it was at the party given on this occasion that the Duchessa met Clelia, and was able to speak to her without causing any suspicion among the fashionable onlookers. The Duchessa herself handed to Clelia the parcel of cords in the garden, where the two ladies had gone for a moment's fresh air. These cords, prepared with the greatest care, of hemp and silk in equal parts, were knotted, very slender and fairly flexible; Lodovico had tested their strength, and, in every portion, they could bear without breaking a load of sixteen hundredweight. They had been packed in such a way as to form several packets each of the size and shape of a quarto volume; Clelia took charge of them, and promised the Duchessa that everything that was humanly possible would be done to deliver these packets in the Torre Farnese.

"But I am afraid of the timidity of your nature; and besides," the Duchessa added politely, "what interest can you feel in a stranger?"

"Signor del Dongo is in distress, *and I promise you that he shall be saved by me!*"

But the Duchessa, placing only a very moderate reliance on the presence of mind of a young person of twenty, had taken other precautions, of which she took care not to inform the governor's daughter. As might be expected, this governor was present at the party given for the marriage of the Marchese Crescenzi's sister. The Duchessa said to herself that, if she could make him be given a strong narcotic, it might be supposed, at first, that he had had an attack of apoplexy, and then, instead of his being placed in his carriage to be taken back to the citadel, it might, with a little arrangement, be possible to have the suggestion adopted of using a litter, which would

happen to be in the house where the party was being given. There, too, would be gathered a body of intelligent men, dressed as workmen employed for the party, who, in the general confusion, would obligingly offer their services to transport the sick man to his *palazzo,* which stood at such a height. These men, under the direction of Lodovico, carried a sufficient quantity of cords, cleverly concealed beneath their clothing. One sees that the Duchessa's mind had become really unbalanced since she had begun to think seriously of Fabrizio's escape. The peril of this beloved creature was too much for her heart, and besides was lasting too long. By her excess of precaution, she nearly succeeded in preventing his escape, as we shall presently see. Everything went off as she had planned, with this one difference, that the narcotic produced too powerful an effect; everyone believed, including the medical profession, that the General had had an apoplectic stroke.

Fortunately, Clelia, who was in despair, had not the least suspicion of so criminal an attempt on the part of the Duchessa. The confusion was such at the moment when the litter, in which the General, half dead, was lying, entered the citadel, that Lodovico and his men passed in without challenge; they were subjected to a formal scrutiny only at the Slave's Bridge. When they had carried the General to his bedroom, they were taken to the kitchens, where the servants entertained them royally; but after this meal, which did not end until it was very nearly morning, it was explained to them that the rule of the prison required that, for the rest of the night, they should be locked up in the lower rooms of the *palazzo;* in the morning at daybreak they would be released by the governor's deputy.

These men had found an opportunity of handing to Lodovico the cords with which they had been loaded, but

Lodovico had great difficulty in attracting Clelia's attention for a moment. At length, as she was passing from one room to another, he made her observe that he was laying down packets of cords in a dark corner of one of the drawing-rooms of the first floor. Clelia was profoundly struck by this strange circumstance; at once she conceived atrocious suspicions.

"Who are you?" she asked Lodovico.

And, on receiving his highly ambiguous reply, she added:

"I ought to have you arrested; you or your masters have poisoned my father! Confess this instant what is the nature of the poison you have used, so that the doctor of the citadel can apply the proper remedies; confess this instant, or else, you and your accomplices shall never go out of this citadel!"

"The Signorina does wrong to be alarmed," replied Lodovico, with a grace and politeness that were perfect; "there is no question of poison; someone has been rash enough to administer to the General a dose of laudanum, and it appears that the servant who was responsible for this crime poured a few drops too many into the glass; this we shall eternally regret; but the Signorina may be assured that, thank heaven, there is no sort of danger; the Signore must be treated for having taken, by mistake, too strong a dose of laudanum; but, I have the honour to repeat to the Signorina, the lackey responsible for the crime made no use of real poisons, as Barbone did, when he tried to poison Monsignor Fabrizio. There was no thought of revenge for the peril that Monsignor Fabrizio ran; nothing was given to this clumsy lackey but a bottle in which there was laudanum, that I swear to the Signorina! But it must be clearly understood that, if I were questioned officially, I should deny everything.

"Besides, if the Signorina speaks to anyone in the world of laudanum and poison, even to the excellent Don

Cesare, Fabrizio is killed by the Signorina's own hand. She makes impossible for ever all the plans of escape; and the Signorina knows better than I that it is not with laudanum that they wish to poison Monsignore; she knows, too, that a certain person has granted only a month's delay for that crime, and that already more than a week has gone by since the fatal order was received. So, if she has me arrested, or if she merely says a word to Don Cesare or to anyone else, she retards all our activities far more than a month, and I am right in saying that she kills Monsignor Fabrizio with her own hand."

Clelia was terrified by the strange tranquillity of Lodovico.

"And so," she said to herself, "here I am conversing formally with my father's poisoner, who employs polite turns of speech to address me! And it is love that has led me to all these crimes! . . ."

Her remorse scarcely allowed her the strength to speak; she said to Lodovico.

"I am going to lock you into this room. I shall run and tell the doctor that it is only laudanum; but, great God, how shall I tell him that I discovered this? I shall come back afterwards to release you. But," said Clelia, running back from the door, "did Fabrizio know anything of the laudanum?"

"Heavens, no, Signorina, he would never have consented to that. And, besides, what good would it have done to make an unnecessary confidence? We are acting with the strictest prudence. It is a question of saving the life of Monsignore, who will be poisoned in three weeks from now; the order has been given by a person who is not accustomed to find any obstacle to his wishes; and, to tell the Signorina everything, they say that it was the terrible Fiscal General Rassi who received these instructions."

. Clelia fled in terror; she could so count on the per-

fect probity of Don Cesare that, taking certain precautions, she had the courage to tell him that the General had been given laudanum, and nothing else. Without answering, without putting any question, Don Cesare ran to the doctor.

Clelia returned to the room in which she had shut up Lodovico, with the intention of plying him with questions about the laudanum. She did not find him: he had managed to escape. She saw on the table a purse full of sequins and a box containing different kinds of poison. The sight of these poisons made her shudder. "How can I be sure," she thought, "that they have given nothing but laudanum to my father, and that the Duchessa has not sought to avenge herself for Barbone's attempt?

"Great God!" she cried, "here am I in league with my father's poisoners. And I allow them to escape! And perhaps that man, when put to the question, would have confessed something else than laudanum!"

Clelia at once fell on her knees, burst into tears, and prayed to the Madonna with fervour.

Meanwhile the doctor of the citadel, greatly surprised by the information he had received from Don Cesare, according to which he had to deal only with laudanum, applied the appropriate remedies, which presently made the more alarming symptoms disappear. The General came to himself a little as day began to dawn. His first action that shewed any sign of consciousness was to hurl insults at the Colonel who was second in command of the citadel, and had taken upon himself to give certain orders, the simplest in the world, while the General was unconscious.

The governor next flew into a towering rage with a kitchenmaid who, when bringing him his soup, had been so rash as to utter the word apoplexy.

"Am I of an age," he cried, "to have apoplexies? It is only my deadly enemies who can find pleasure in spread-

ing such reports. And besides, have I been bled, that slander itself dare speak of apoplexy?"

Fabrizio, wholly occupied with the preparations for his escape, could not understand the strange sounds that filled the citadel at the moment when the governor was brought in half dead. At first he had some idea that his sentence had been altered, and that they were coming to put him to death. Then, seeing that no one came to his cell, he thought that Clelia had been betrayed, that on her return to the fortress they had taken from her the cords which probably she was bringing back, and so, that his plans of escape were for the future impossible. Next day, at dawn, he saw come into his room a man unknown to him, who, without saying a word, laid down a basket of fruit: beneath the fruit was hidden the following letter:

"Penetrated by the keenest remorse for what has been done, not, thank heaven, by my consent, but as the outcome of an idea which I had, I have made a vow to the Blessed Virgin that if, by the effect of Her holy intercession my father is saved, I will never refuse to obey any of his orders; I will marry the Marchese as soon as he requires me to do so, and I will never see you again. However, I consider it my duty to finish what has been begun. Next Sunday, when you return from mass, to which you will be taken at my request (remember to prepare your soul, you may kill yourself in the difficult enterprise); when you return from mass, I say, put off as long as possible going back to your room; you will find there what is necessary for the enterprise that you have in mind. If you perish, my heart will be broken! Will you be able to accuse me of having contributed to your death? Has not the Duchessa herself repeated to me upon several occasions that the Raversi faction is winning?

They seek to bind the Prince by an act of cruelty that must separate him for ever from Conte Mosca. The Duchessa, with floods of tears, has sworn to me that there remains only this resource: you will perish unless you make an attempt. I cannot look at you again, I have made my vow; but if on Sunday, towards evening, you see me dressed entirely in black, at the usual window, it will be the signal that everything will be ready that night so far as my feeble means allow. After eleven, perhaps at midnight or at one o'clock, a little lamp will appear in my window, that will be the decisive moment; commend yourself to your Holy Patron, dress yourself in haste in the priestly habit with which you are provided, and be off.

"Farewell, Fabrizio, I shall be at my prayers, and shedding the most bitter tears, as you may well believe, while you are running such great risks. If you perish, I shall not outlive you a day; Great God! What am I saying? But if you succeed, I shall never see you again. On Sunday, after mass, you will find in your prison the money, the poison, the cords, sent by that terrible woman who loves you with passion, and who has three times over assured me that this course must be adopted. May God preserve you, and the Blessed Madonna!"

Fabio Conti was a gaoler who was always uneasy, always unhappy, always seeing in his dreams one of his prisoners escaping: he was loathed by everyone in the citadel; but misfortune inspiring the same resolutions in all men, the poor prisoners, even those who were chained in dungeons three feet high, three feet wide and eight feet long, in which they could neither stand nor sit, all the prisoners, even these, I say, had the idea of ordering a

*Te Deum* to be sung at their own expense, when they knew that their governor was out of danger. Two or three of these wretches composed sonnets in honour of Fabio Conti. Oh, the effect of misery upon men! May he who would blame them be led by his destiny to spend a year in a cell three feet high, with eight ounces of bread a day and *fasting* on Fridays!

Clelia, who left her father's room only to pray in the chapel, said that the governor had decided that the rejoicings should be confined to Sunday. On the morning of this Sunday, Fabrizio was present at mass and at the *Te Deum;* in the evening there were fireworks, and in the lower rooms of the *palazzo* the soldiers received a quantity of wine four times that which the governor had allowed; an unknown hand had even sent several barrels of brandy which the soldiers broached. The generous spirit of the soldiers who were becoming intoxicated would not allow the five of their number who were on duty as sentries outside the *palazzo* to suffer accordingly; as soon as they arrived at their sentry-boxes, a trusted servant gave them wine, and it was not known from what hand those who came on duty at midnight and for the rest of the night received also a glass each of brandy, while the bottle was in each case forgotten and left by the sentry-box (as was proved in the subsequent investigations).

The disorder lasted longer than Clelia had expected, and it was not until nearly one o'clock that Fabrizio, who, more than a week earlier, had sawn through two bars of his window, the window that did not look out on the aviary, began to take down the screen; he was working almost over the heads of the sentries who were guarding the governor's *palazzo,* they heard nothing. He had made some fresh knots only in the immense cord necessary for descending from that terrible height of one hundred and eighty feet. He arranged this cord as a bandolier about

his body: it greatly embarrassed him, its bulk was enormous; the knots prevented it from being wound close, and it projected more than eighteen inches from his body. "This is the chief obstacle," said Fabrizio.

This cord once arranged as well as possible, Fabrizio took the other with which he counted on climbing down the thirty-five feet which separated his window from the terrace on which the governor's *palazzo* stood. But inasmuch as, however drunken the sentries might be, he could not descend exactly over their heads, he climbed out, as we have said, by the second window of his room, that which looked over the roof of a sort of vast guard-room. By a sick man's whim, as soon as General Fabio Conti was able to speak, he had ordered up two hundred soldiers into this old guard-room, disused for over a century. He said that after poisoning him, they would seek to murder him in his bed, and these two hundred soldiers were to guard him. One may judge of the effect which this unforeseen measure had on the heart of Clelia: that pious girl was fully conscious to what an extent she was betraying her father, and a father who had just been almost poisoned in the interests of the prisoner whom she loved. She almost saw in the unexpected arrival of these two hundred men an act of Providence which forbade her to go any farther and to give Fabrizio his freedom.

But everyone in Parma was talking of the immediate death of the prisoner. This grim subject had been discussed again at the party given on the occasion of the marriage of Donna Giulia Crescenzi. Since for such a mere trifle as a clumsy sword-thrust given to an actor, a man of Fabrizio's birth was not set at liberty at the end of nine months' imprisonment, and when he had the protection of the Prime Minister, it must be because politics entered into the case. And in that event, it was useless to think any more about him, people said; if it was not con-

venient to authority to put him to death in a public place, he would soon die of sickness. A locksmith who had been summoned to General Fabio Conti's *palazzo* spoke of Fabrizio as of a prisoner long since dispatched, whose death was being kept secret from motives of policy. This man's words decided Clelia.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

DURING the day Fabrizio was attacked by certain serious and disagreeable reflexions; but as he heard the hours strike that brought him nearer to the moment of action, he began to feel alert and ready. The Duchessa had written that he would feel the shock of the fresh air, and that once he was out of his prison he might find it impossible to walk; in that case it was better to run the risk of being caught than to let himself fall from a height of a hundred and eighty feet. "If I have that misfortune," said Fabrizio, "I shall lie down beneath the parapet, I shall sleep for an hour, then I shall start again. Since I have sworn to Clelia that I will make the attempt, I prefer to fall from the top of a rampart, however high, rather than always to have to think about the taste of the bread I eat. What horrible pains one must feel before the end, when one dies of poison! Fabio Conti will stand on no ceremony, he will make them give me the arsenic with which he kills the rats in his citadel."

Towards midnight, one of those thick white fogs in which the Po sometimes swathes its banks, spread first of all over the town, and then reached the esplanade and the bastions from the midst of which rises the great tower of the citadel. Fabrizio estimated that from the parapet of the platform it would be impossible to make out the young acacias that surrounded the gardens laid out by the soldiers at the foot of the hundred and eighty foot wall. "That, now, is excellent," he thought.

Shortly after half past twelve had struck, the signal of the little lamp appeared at the aviary window. Fabrizio was ready for action; he crossed himself, then fastened to his bed the fine cord intended to enable him to descend the thirty-five feet that separated him from the platform on which the *palazzo* stood. He arrived without meeting any obstacle on the roof of the guard-room occupied overnight by the reinforcement of two hundred soldiers of whom we have spoken. Unfortunately, the soldiers, at a quarter to one in the morning, as it now was, had not yet gone to sleep; while he was creeping on tiptoe over the roof of large curved tiles, Fabrizio could hear them saying that the devil was on the roof, and that they must try to kill him with a shot from a musket. Certain voices insisted that this desire savoured of great impiety; others said that if a shot were fired without killing anything, the governor would put them all in prison for having alarmed the garrison without cause. The upshot of this discussion was that Fabrizio walked across the roof as quickly as possible and made a great deal more noise. The fact remains that at the moment when, hanging by his cord, he passed opposite the windows, mercifully at a distance of four or five feet owing to the projection of the roof, they were bristling with bayonets. Some accounts suggest that Fabrizio, mad as ever, had the idea of acting the part of the devil, and that he flung these soldiers a handful of sequins. One thing certain is that he had scattered sequins upon the floor of his room, and that he scattered more on the platform on his way from the Torre Farnese to the parapet, so as to give himself the chance of distracting the attention of the soldiers who might come in pursuit of him.

Landing upon the platform where he was surrounded by soldiers, who ordinarily called out every quarter of an hour a whole sentence: "All's well around my post!" he

directed his steps towards the western parapet and sought for the new stone.

The thing that appears incredible and might make one doubt the truth of the story if the result had not had a whole town for witnesses, is that the sentries posted along the parapet did not see and arrest Fabrizio; as a matter of fact the fog was beginning to rise, and Fabrizio said afterwards that when he was on the platform the fog seemed to him to have come already halfway up the Torre Farnese. But this fog was by no means thick, and he could quite well see the sentries, some of whom were moving. He added that, impelled as though by a supernatural force, he went to take up his position boldly between two sentries who were quite near one another. He calmly unwound the big cord which he had round his body, and which twice became entangled; it took him a long time to unravel it and spread it out on the parapet. He heard the soldiers talking on all sides of him, and was quite determined to stab the first who advanced upon him. "I was not in the least anxious," he added, "I felt as though I were performing a ceremony."

He fastened his cord, when it was finally unravelled, through an opening cut in the parapet for the escape of rain-water, climbed on to the said parapet and prayed to God with fervour; then, like a hero of the days of chivalry, he thought for a moment of Clelia. "How different I am," he said to himself, "from the fickle, libertine Fabrizio of nine months ago!" At length he began to descend that astounding height. He acted mechanically, he said, and as he would have done in broad daylight, climbing down a wall before friends, to win a wager. About halfway down, he suddenly felt his arms lose their strength; he thought afterwards that he had even let go the cord for an instant, but he soon caught hold of it again; possibly, he said, he had held on to the bushes

into which he slipped, receiving some scratches from them. He felt from time to time an agonising pain between his shoulders; it actually took away his breath. There was an extremely unpleasant swaying motion; he was constantly flung from the cord to the bushes. He was brushed by several birds which he aroused, and which dashed at him in their flight. At first, he thought that he was being clutched by men who had come down from the citadel by the same way as himself in pursuit, and he prepared to defend his life. Finally he arrived at the base of the great tower without any inconvenience save that of having blood on his hands. He relates that, from the middle of the tower, the slope which it forms was of great use to him; he hugged the wall all the way down, and the plants growing between the stones gave him great support. On reaching the foot, among the soldiers' gardens, he fell upon an acacia which, looked at from above, had seemed to him to be four or five feet high, but was really fifteen or twenty. A drunken man who was lying asleep beneath it took him for a robber. In his fall from this tree, Fabrizio nearly dislocated his right arm. He started to run towards the rampart; but, as he said, his legs felt like cotton, he had no longer any strength. In spite of the danger, he sat down and drank a little brandy which he had left. He dozed off for a few minutes to the extent of not knowing where he was; on awaking, he could not understand how, lying in bed in his cell, he saw trees. Then the terrible truth came back to his mind. At once he stepped out to the rampart, and climbed it by a big stair. The sentry who was posted close beside this stair was snoring in his box. He found a cannon lying in the grass; he fastened his third cord to it; it proved to be a little too short, and he fell into a muddy ditch in which there was perhaps a foot of water. As he was picking himself up and trying to take his bearings, he felt himself

seized by two men; he was afraid for a moment; but presently heard a voice close to his ear whisper very softly: "Ah! Monsignore, Monsignore!" He gathered vaguely that these men belonged to the Duchessa; at once he fell in a dead faint. A minute later, he felt that he was being carried by men who were marching in silence and very fast; then they stopped, which caused him great uneasiness. But he had not the strength either to speak or to open his eyes; he felt that he was being clasped in someone's arm; suddenly he recognised the scent of the Duchessa's clothing. This scent revived him; he opened his eyes; he was able to utter the words: "Ah! Dear friend!" Then once again he fainted away.

The faithful Bruno, with a squad of police all devoted to the Conte, was in reserve at a distance of two hundred yards; the Conte himself was hidden in a small house close to the place where the Duchessa was waiting. He would not have hesitated, had it been necessary, to take his sword in his hand, with a party of half-pay officers, his intimate friends; he regarded himself as obliged to save the life of Fabrizio, who seemed to him to be exposed to great risk, and would long ago have had his pardon signed by the Prince, if he, Mosca, had not been so foolish as to seek to avoid making the Sovereign write a foolish thing.

Since midnight the Duchessa, surrounded by men armed to the teeth, had been pacing in deep silence outside the ramparts of the citadel; she could not stay in one place, she thought that she would have to fight to rescue Fabrizio from the men who would pursue him. This ardent imagination had taken a hundred precautions, too long to be given here in detail, and of an incredible imprudence. It was calculated that more than eighty agents were afoot that night, in readiness to fight for something extraordinary. Fortunately Ferrante and Lodovico were at the head of

all these men, and the Minister of Police was not hostile; but the Conte himself remarked that the Duchessa was not betrayed by anyone, and that he himself, as Minister, knew nothing.

The Duchessa lost her head altogether on seeing Fabrizio again; she clasped him convulsively in her arms, then was in despair on seeing herself covered in blood: it was the blood from Fabrizio's hands; she thought that he was dangerously wounded. With the assistance of one of her men, she was taking off his coat to bandage him when Lodovico, who fortunately happened to be on the spot, firmly put her and Fabrizio in one of the little carriages which were hidden in a garden near the gate of the town, and they set off at full gallop to cross the Po near Sacca. Ferrante, with a score of well-armed men, formed the rearguard, and had sworn on his head to stop the pursuit. The Conte, alone and on foot, did not leave the neighbourhood of the citadel until two hours later, when he saw that no one was stirring. "Look at me, committing high treason," he said to himself, mad with joy.

Lodovico had the excellent idea of placing in one of the carriages a young surgeon attached to the Duchessa's household, who was of much the same build as Fabrizio.

"Make your escape," he told him, "in the direction of Bologna; be as awkward as possible, try to have yourself arrested; then contradict yourself in your answers, and finally admit that you are Fabrizio del Dongo; above all, gain time. Use your skill in being awkward, you will get off with a month's imprisonment, and the Signora will give you fifty sequins."

"Does one think of money when one is serving the Signora?"

He set off, and was arrested a few hours later, an event which gave great joy to General Fabio Conti and also to

Rassi, who, with Fabrizio's peril, saw his Barony taking flight.

The escape was not known at the citadel until about six o'clock in the morning, and it was not until ten that they dared inform the Prince. The Duchessa had been so well served that, in spite of Fabrizio's deep sleep, which she mistook for a dead faint, with the result that she stopped the carriage three times, she crossed the Po in a boat as four was striking. There were relays on the other side, they covered two leagues more at great speed, then were stopped for more than an hour for the examination of their passports. The Duchessa had every variety of these for herself and Fabrizio; but she was mad that day, and took it into her head to give ten napoleons to the clerk of the Austrian police, and to clasp his hand and burst into tears. This clerk, greatly alarmed, began the examination afresh. They took post; the Duchessa paid in so extravagant a fashion that everywhere she aroused suspicions, in that land where every stranger is suspect. Lodovico came to the rescue again: he said that the Signora Duchessa was beside herself with grief at the protracted fever of young Conte Mosca, son of the Prime Minister of Parma, whom she was taking with her to consult the doctors of Pavia.

It was not until they were ten leagues beyond the Po that the prisoner really awoke; he had a dislocated shoulder and a number of slight cuts. The Duchessa again behaved in so extraordinary a fashion that the landlord of a village inn where they dined thought he was entertaining a Princess of the Imperial House, and was going to pay her the honours which he supposed to be due to her when Lodovico told him that the Princess would without fail have him put in prison if he thought of ordering the bells to be rung.

At length, about six o'clock in the evening, they reached

Piedmontese territory. There for the first time Fabrizio was in complete safety; he was taken to a little village off the high road, the cuts on his hands were dressed, and he slept for several hours more.

It was in this village that the Duchessa allowed herself to take a step that was not only horrible from the moral point of view, but also fatal to the tranquillity of the rest of her life. Some weeks before Fabrizio's escape, on a day when the whole of Parma had gone to the gate of the citadel, hoping to see in the courtyard the scaffold that was being erected for his benefit, the Duchessa had shown to Lodovico, who had become the factotum of her household, the secret by which one raised from a little iron frame, very cunningly concealed, one of the stones forming the floor of the famous reservoir of the *palazzo* Sanseverina, a work of the thirteenth century, of which we have spoken already. While Fabrizio was lying asleep in the *trattoria* of this little village, the Duchessa sent for Lodovico. He thought that she had gone mad, so strange was the look that she gave him.

"You probably expect," she said to him, "that I am going to give you several thousand francs; well, I am not; I know you, you are a poet, you would soon squander it all. I am giving you the small *podere* of La Ricciarda, a league from Casalmaggiore." Lodovico flung himself at her feet, mad with joy, and protesting in heartfelt accents that it was not with any thought of earning money that he had helped to save Monsignor Fabrizio; that he had always loved him with a special affection since he had had the honour to drive him once, in his capacity as the Signora's third coachman. When this man, who was genuinely warm-hearted, thought that he had taken up enough of the time of so great a lady, he took his leave; but she, with flashing eyes, said to him:

"Wait!"

She paced without uttering a word the floor of this inn room, looking from time to time at Lodovico with incredible eyes. Finally the man, seeing that this strange exercise showed no sign of coming to an end, took it upon himself to address his mistress.

"The Signora has made me so extravagant a gift, one so far beyond anything that a poor man like me could imagine, and moreover so much greater than the humble services which I have had the honour to render, that I feel, on my conscience, that I cannot accept the *podere* of La Ricciarda. I have the honour to return this land to the Signora, and to beg her to grant me a pension of four hundred francs."

"How many times in your life," she said to him with the most sombre pride, "how many times have you heard it said that I had abandoned a project once I had made it?"

After uttering this sentence, the Duchessa continued to walk up and down the room for some minutes; then suddenly stopping, cried:

"It is by accident, and because he managed to attract that little girl, that Fabrizio's life has been saved! If he had not been attractive, he would now be dead. Can you deny that?" she asked, advancing on Lodovico with eyes in which the darkest fury blazed. Lodovico recoiled a few steps and thought her mad, which gave him great uneasiness as to the possession of his *podere* of La Ricciarda.

"Very well!" the Duchessa went on, in the most winning and light-hearted tone, completely changed, "I wish my good people of Sacca to have a mad holiday which they will long remember. You are going to return to Sacca; have you any objection? Do you think that you will be running any risk?"

"None to speak of, Signora: none of the people of Sacca will ever say that I was in Monsignor Fabrizio's

service. Besides, if I may venture to say so to the Signora, I am burning to see *my* property at La Ricciarda: it seems so odd for me to be a landowner!"

"Your gaiety pleases me. The farmer at La Ricciarda owes me, I think, three or four years' rent; I make him a present of half of what he owes me, and the other half of all these arrears I give to you, but on this condition: you will go to Sacca, you will say there that the day after tomorrow is the *festa* of one of my patron saints, and, on the evening after your arrival, you will have my house illuminated in the most splendid fashion. Spare neither money nor trouble; remember that the occasion is the greatest happiness of my life. I have prepared for this illumination long beforehand; more than three months ago, I collected in the cellars of the house everything that can be used for this noble *festa;* I have put the gardener in charge of all the fireworks necessary for a magnificent display: you will let them off from the terrace overlooking the Po. I have eighty-nine large barrels of wine in my cellars, you will set up eighty-nine fountains of wine in my park. If next day there remains a single bottle which has not been drunk, I shall say that you do not love Fabrizio. When the fountains of wine, the illumination and the fireworks are well started, you will slip away cautiously, for it is possible, and it is my hope, that at Parma all these fine doings may appear an insolence."

"It is not possible, it is only a certainty; as it is certain too that the Fiscal Rassi, who signed Monsignore's sentence, will burst with rage. And indeed," added Lodovico timidly, "if the Signora wished to give more pleasure to her poor servant than by bestowing on him half the arrears of La Ricciarda, she would allow me to play a little joke on that Rassi. . . ."

"You are a stout fellow!" cried the Duchessa in a transport; "but I forbid you absolutely to do anything to

Rassi: I have a plan of having him publicly hanged, later on. As for you, try not to have yourself arrested at Sacca; everything would be spoiled if I lost you."

"I, Signora! After I have said that I am celebrating the *festa* of one of the Signora's patrons, if the police sent thirty constables to upset things, you may be sure that before they had reached the Croce Rossa in the middle of the village, not one of them would be on his horse. They're no fools, the people of Sacca; finished smugglers all of them, and they worship the Signora."

"Finally," went on the Duchessa with a singularly detached air, "if I give wine to my good people of Sacca, I wish to flood the inhabitants of Parma; the same evening on which my house is illuminated, take the best horse in my stable, dash to my *palazzo* in Parma, and open the reservoir."

"Ah! What an excellent idea of the Signora!" cried Lodovico, laughing like a madman; "wine for the good people of Sacca, water for the cits of Parma, who were so sure, the wretches, that Monsignor Fabrizio was going to be poisoned like poor L——."

Lodovico's joy knew no end; the Duchessa complacently watched his wild laughter; he kept on repeating "Wine for the people of Sacca and water for the people of Parma! The Signora no doubt knows better than I that when they rashly emptied the reservoir, twenty years ago, there was as much as a foot of water in many of the streets of Parma."

"And water for the people of Parma," retorted the Duchessa with a laugh. "The avenue past the citadel would have been filled with people if they had cut off Fabrizio's head. . . . They all call him *the great culprit*. . . . But, above all, do everything carefully, so that not a living soul knows that the flood was started by you or ordered by me. Fabrizio, the Conte himself must be left in ignorance of this mad prank. . . . But I was forgetting the poor of

Sacca: go and write a letter to my agent, which I shall sign; you will tell him that, for the *festa* of my holy patron, he must distribute a hundred sequins among the poor of Sacca, and tell him to obey you in everything to do with the illumination, the fireworks and the wine; and especially that there must not be a full bottle in my cellars next day."

"The Signora's agent will have no difficulty except in one thing: in the five years that the Signora has had the villa, she has not left ten poor persons in Sacca."

"*And water for the people of Parma!*" the Duchessa went on chanting. "How will you carry out this joke?"

"My plans are all made: I leave Sacca about nine o'clock, at half past ten my horse is at the inn of the Tre Ganasce, on the road to Casalmaggiore and to *my podere* of La Ricciarda; at eleven, I am in my room in the *palazzo,* and at a quarter past eleven water for the people of Parma, and more than they wish, to drink to the health of the great culprit. Ten minutes later, I leave the town by the Bologna road. I make, as I pass it, a profound bow to the citadel, which Monsignore's courage and the Signora's spirit have succeeded in disgracing; I take a path across country, which I know well, and I make my entry into La Ricciarda."

Lodovico raised his eyes to the Duchessa and was startled. She was staring fixedly at the blank wall six paces away from her, and, it must be admitted, her expression was terrible. "Ah! My poor *podere!*" thought Lodovico. "The fact of the matter is, she is mad!" The Duchessa looked at him and read his thoughts.

"Ah! Signor Lodovico the great poet, you wish a deed of gift in writing: run and find me a sheet of paper." Lodovico did not wait to be told twice, and the Duchessa wrote out in her own hand a long form of receipt, antedated by a year, in which she declared that she had re-

ceived from Lodovico San Micheli the sum of 80,000 francs, and had given him in pledge the lands of La Ricciarda. If after the lapse of twelve months the Duchessa had not restored the said 80,000 francs to Lodovico, the lands of La Ricciarda were to remain his property.

"It is a fine action," the Duchessa said to herself, "to give to a faithful servant nearly a third of what I have left for myself."

"Now then," she said to Lodovico, "after the joke of the reservoir, I give you just two days to enjoy yourself at Casalmaggiore. For the conveyance to hold good, say that it is a transaction which dates back more than a year. Come back and join me at Belgirate, and as quickly as possible; Fabrizio is perhaps going to England, where you will follow him."

Early the next day the Duchessa and Fabrizio were at Belgirate.

They took up their abode in that enchanting village; but a killing grief awaited the Duchessa on Lake Maggiore. Fabrizio was entirely changed; from the first moments in which he had awoken from his sleep, still somewhat lethargic, after his escape, the Duchessa had noticed that something out of the common was occurring in him. The deep-lying sentiment, which he took great pains to conceal, was distinctly odd, it was nothing less than this: he was in despair at being out of his prison. He was careful not to admit this cause of his sorrow, which would have led to questions which he did not wish to answer.

"What!" said the Duchessa, in amazement, "that horrible sensation when hunger forced you to feed, so as not to fall down, on one of those loathsome dishes supplied by the prison kitchen, that sensation: 'Is there some strange taste in this, am I poisoning myself at this moment?'—did not that sensation fill you with horror?"

"I thought of death," replied Fabrizio, "as I suppose

soldiers think of it: it was a possible thing which I thought to avoid by taking care."

And so, what uneasiness, what grief for the Duchessa! This adored, singular, vivid, original creature was now before her eyes a prey to an endless train of fancies; he actually preferred solitude to the pleasure of talking of all manner of things, and with an open heart, to the best friend that he had in the world. Still he was always good, assiduous, grateful towards the Duchessa; he would, as before, have given his life a hundred times over for her; but his heart was elsewhere. They often went four or five leagues over that sublime lake without uttering a word. The conversation, the exchange of cold thoughts that from then onwards was possible between them might perhaps have seemed pleasant to others; but they remembered still, the Duchessa especially, what their conversation had been before that fatal fight with Giletti which had set them apart. Fabrizio owed the Duchessa an account of the nine months that he had spent in a horrible prison, and it appeared that he had nothing to say of this detention but brief and unfinished sentences.

"It was bound to happen sooner or later," the Duchessa told herself with a gloomy sadness. "Grief has aged me, or else he is really in love, and I have now only the second place in his heart." Demeaned, cast down by the greatest of all possible griefs, the Duchessa said to herself at times: "If, by the will of Heaven, Ferrante should become mad altogether, or his courage should fail, I feel that I should be less unhappy." From that moment this half-remorse poisoned the esteem that the Duchessa had for her own character. "So," she said to herself bitterly, "I am repenting of a resolution I have already made. Then I am no longer a del Dongo!"

"It is the will of Heaven," she would say: "Fabrizio is in love, and what right have I to wish that he should not

be in love? Has one single word of genuine love ever passed between us?"

This idea, reasonable as it was, kept her from sleeping, and in short, a thing which shewed how old age and a weakening of the heart had come over her, she was a hundred times more unhappy than at Parma. As for the person who could be responsible for Fabrizio's strange abstraction, it was hardly possible to entertain any reasonable doubt: Clelia Conti, that pious girl, had betrayed her father since she had consented to make the garrison drunk, and never once did Fabrizio speak of Clelia! "But," added the Duchessa, beating her breast in desperation, "if the garrison had not been made drunk, all my stratagems, all my exertions became useless; so it is she that saved him!"

It was with extreme difficulty that the Duchessa obtained from Fabrizio any details of the events of that night, which, she said to herself, "would at one time have been the subject of an endlessly renewed discussion between us! In those happy times he would have talked for a whole day, with a force and gaiety endlessly renewed, of the smallest trifle which I thought of bringing forward."

As it was necessary to think of everything, the Duchessa had installed Fabrizio at the port of Locarno, a Swiss town at the head of Lake Maggiore. Every day she went to fetch him in a boat for long excursions over the lake. Well, on one occason when she took it into her head to go up to his room, she found the walls lined with a number of views of the town of Parma, for which he had sent to Milan or to Parma itself, a place which he ought to be holding in abomination. His little sitting-room, converted into a studio, was littered with all the apparatus of a painter in water-colours, and she found him finishing a third sketch of the Torre Farnese and the governor's *palazzo*.

"The only thing for you to do now," she said to him with an air of vexation, "is to make a portrait from memory of that charming governor whose only wish was to poison you. But, while I think of it," she went on, "you ought to write him a letter of apology for having taken the liberty of escaping and making his citadel look foolish."

The poor woman little knew how true her words were: no sooner had he arrived in a place of safety than Fabrizio's first thought had been to write General Fabio Conti a perfectly polite and in a sense highly ridiculous letter; he asked his pardon for having escaped, offering as an excuse that a certain subordinate in the prison had been ordered to give him poison. Little did he care what he wrote, Fabrizio hoped that Clelia's eyes would see this letter, and his cheeks were wet with tears as he wrote it. He ended it with a very pleasant sentence: he ventured to say that, finding himself at liberty, he frequently had occasion to regret his little room in the Torre Farnese. This was the principal thought in his letter, he hoped that Clelia would understand it. In his writing vein, and always in the hope of being read by someone, Fabrizio addressed his thanks to Don Cesare, that good chaplain who had lent him books on theology. A few days later Fabrizio arranged that the small bookseller of Locarno should make the journey to Milan, where this bookseller, a friend of the celebrated bibliomaniac Reina, bought the most sumptuous editions that he could find of the works that Don Cesare had lent Fabrizio. The good chaplain received these books and a handsome letter which informed him that, in moments of impatience, pardonable perhaps to a poor prisoner, the writer had covered the margins of his books with silly notes. He begged him, accordingly, to replace them in his library with the volumes which the most lively gratitude took the liberty of presenting to him.

Fabrizio was very modest in giving the simple name of notes to the endless scribblings with which he had covered the margins of a folio volume of the works of Saint Jerome. In the hope that he might be able to send back this book to the good chaplain, and exchange it for another, he had written day by day on the margins a very exact diary of all that occurred to him in prison; the great events were nothing else than ecstasies of *divine love* (this word *divine* took the place of another which he dared not write). At one moment this divine love led the prisoner to a profound despair, at other times a voice heard in the air restored some hope and caused transports of joy. All this, fortunately, was written with prison ink, made of wine, chocolate and soot, and Don Cesare had done no more than cast an eye over it as he put back on his shelves the volume of Saint Jerome. If he had studied the margins, he would have seen that one day the prisoner, believing himself to have been poisoned, was congratulating himself on dying at a distance of less than forty yards from what he had loved best in the world. But another eye than the good chaplain's had read this page since his escape. That fine idea: *To die near what one loves!* expressed in a hundred different fashions, was followed by a sonnet in which one saw that this soul, parted, after atrocious torments, from the frail body in which it had dwelt for three-and-twenty years, urged by that instinct for happiness natural to everything that has once existed, would not mount to heaven to mingle with the choirs of angels as soon as it should be free, and should the dread Judgment grant it pardon for its sins; but that, more fortunate after death than it had been in life, it would go a little way from the prison, where for so long it had groaned, to unite itself with all that it had loved in this world. And "So," said the last line of the sonnet, "I should find my earthly paradise."

Although they spoke of Fabrizio in the citadel of Parma only as of an infamous traitor who had outraged the most sacred ties of duty, still the good priest Don Cesare was delighted by the sight of the fine books which an unknown hand had conveyed to him; for Fabrizio had decided to write to him only a few days after sending them, for fear lest his name might make the whole parcel be rejected with indignation. Don Cesare said no word of this kind attention to his brother, who flew into a rage at the mere name of Fabrizio; but since the latter's flight, he had returned to all his old intimacy with his charming niece; and as he had once taught her a few words of Latin, he let her see the fine books that he had received. Such had been the traveller's hope. Suddenly Clelia blushed deeply, she had recognized Fabrizio's handwriting. Long and very narrow strips of yellow paper were placed by way of markers in various parts of the volume. And as it is true to say that in the midst of the sordid pecuniary interests, and of the colourless coldness of the vulgar thoughts which fill our lives, the actions inspired by a true passion rarely fail to produce their effect; as though a propitious deity were taking the trouble to lead them by the hand, Clelia, guided by this instinct, and by the thought of one thing only in the world, asked her uncle to compare the old copy of Saint Jerome with the one that he had just received. How can I describe her rapture in the midst of the gloomy sadness in which Fabrizio's absence had plunged her, when she found on the margins of the old Saint Jerome the sonnet of which we have spoken, and the records, day by day, of the love that he had felt for her.

From the first day she knew the sonnet by heart; she would sing it, leaning on her window sill, before the window, henceforward empty, where she had so often seen a little opening appear in the screen. This screen had

been taken down to be placed in the office of the criminal court, and to serve as evidence in a ridiculous prosecution which Rassi was drawing up against Fabrizio, accused of the crime of having escaped, or, as the Fiscal said, laughing himself as he said it, *of having removed himself from the clemency of a magnanimous Prince!*

Each stage in Clelia's actions was for her a matter for keen remorse, and now that she was unhappy, her remorse was all the keener. She sought to mitigate somewhat the reproaches that she addressed to herself by reminding herself of the vow *never to see Fabrizio again,* which she had made to the Madonna at the time when the General was nearly poisoned, and since then had renewed daily.

Her father had been made ill by Fabrizio's escape, and, moreover, had been on the point of losing his post, when the Prince, in his anger, dismissed all the gaolers of the Torre Farnese, and sent them as prisoners to the town gaol. The General had been saved partly by the intercession of Conte Mosca, who preferred to see him shut up at the top of his citadel, rather than as an active and intriguing rival in court circles.

It was during the fortnight of uncertainty as to the disgrace of General Fabio Conti, who was really ill, that Clelia had the courage to carry out this sacrifice which she had announced to Fabrizio. She had had the sense to be ill on the day of the general rejoicings, which was also that of the prisoner's flight, as the reader may perhaps remember; she was ill also on the following day, and, in a word, managed things so well that, with the exception of Grillo, whose special duty it was to look after Fabrizio, no one had any suspicion of her complicity, and Grillo held his tongue.

But as soon as Clelia had no longer any anxiety in that direction, she was even more cruelly tormented by her

just remorse. "What argument in the world," she asked herself, "can mitigate the crime of a daughter who betrays her father?"

One evening, after a day spent almost entirely in the chapel, and in tears, she begged her uncle, Don Cesare, to accompany her to the General, whose outbursts of rage alarmed her all the more since into every topic he introduced imprecations against Fabrizio, that abominable traitor.

Having come into her father's presence, she had the courage to say to him that if she had always refused to give her hand to the Marchese Crescenzi, it was because she did not feel any inclination towards him, and was certain of finding no happiness in such a union. At these words the General flew into a rage; and Clelia had some difficulty in making herself heard. She added that if her father, tempted by the Marchese's great fortune, felt himself bound to give her a definite order to marry him, she was prepared to obey. The General was quite astonished by this conclusion, which he had been far from expecting; he ended, however, by rejoicing at it. "So," he said to his brother, "I shall not be reduced to a lodging on a second floor, if that scoundrel Fabrizio makes me lose my post through his vile conduct."

Conte Mosca did not fail to shew himself profoundly scandalised by the flight of that *scapegrace* Fabrizio, and repeated when the occasion served the expression invented by Rassi to describe the base conduct of the young man—a very vulgar young man, to boot—who had removed himself from the clemency of the Prince. This witty expression, consecrated by good society, did not take hold at all of the people. Left to their own good sense, while fully believing in Fabrizio's guilt they admired the determination that he must have had to let himself down from so high a wall. Not a creature at court admired

this courage. As for the police, greatly humiliated by this rebuff, they had officially discovered that a band of twenty soldiers, corrupted by the money distributed by the Duchessa, that woman of such atrocious ingratitude whose name was no longer uttered save with a sigh, had given Fabrizio four ladders tied together, each forty-five feet long; Fabrizio, having let down a cord which they had tied to these ladders, had had only the quite commonplace distinction of pulling the ladders up to where he was. Certain Liberals, well known for their imprudence, and among them Doctor C——, an agent paid directly by the Prince, added, but compromised themselves by adding that these atrocious police had had the barbarity to shoot eight of the unfortunate soldiers who had facilitated the flight of that wretch Fabrizio. Thereupon he was blamed even by the true Liberals, as having caused by his imprudence the death of eight poor soldiers. It is thus that petty despotisms reduce to nothing the value of public opinion.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AMID this general uproar, Archbishop Landriani alone shewed himself loyal to the cause of his young friend; he made bold to repeat, even at the Princess's court, the legal maxim according to which, in every case, one ought to keep an ear free from all prejudice to hear the plea of an absent party.

The day after Fabrizio's escape a number of people had received a sonnet of no great merit which celebrated this flight as one of the fine actions of the age, and compared Fabrizio to an angel arriving on the earth with outspread wings. On the evening of the following day, the whole of Parma was repeating a sublime sonnet. It was Fabrizio's monologue as he let himself slide down the cord, and passed judgment on the different incidents of his life. This sonnet gave him a place in literature by two magnificent lines; all the experts recognised the style of Ferrante Palla.

But here I must seek the epic style: where can I find colours in which to paint the torrents of indignation that suddenly flooded every orthodox heart, when they learned of the frightful insolence of this illumination of the house at Sacca? There was but one outcry against the Duchessa; even the true Liberals decided that such an action compromised in a barbarous fashion the poor suspects detained in the various prisons, and needlessly exasperated the heart of the sovereign. Conte Mosca declared that there was but one thing left for the Duchessa's former

friends—to forget her. The concert of execration was therefore unanimous: a stranger passing through the town would have been struck by the energy of public opinion. But in the country, where they know how to appreciate the pleasure of revenge, the illumination and the admirable feast given in the park to more than six thousand *contadini* had an immense success. Everyone in Parma repeated that the Duchessa had distributed a thousand sequins among her *contadini;* thus they explained the somewhat harsh reception given to a party of thirty constables whom the police had been so foolish as to send to that small village, thirty-six hours after the sublime evening and the general intoxication that had followed it. The constables, greeted with showers of stones, had turned and fled, and two of their number, who fell from their horses, were flung into the Po.

As for the bursting of the great reservoir of the *palazzo* Sanseverina, it had passed almost unnoticed: it was during the night that several streets had been more or less flooded, next morning one would have said that it had *rained.* Lodovico had taken care to break the panes of a window in the *palazzo,* so as to account for the entry of robbers.

They had even found a little ladder. Only Conte Mosca recognised his friend's inventive genius.

Fabrizio was fully determined to return to Parma as soon as he could; he sent Lodovico with a long letter to the Archbishop, and this faithful servant came back to post at the first village in Piedmont, San Nazzaro, to the west of Pavia, a Latin epistle which the worthy prelate addressed to his young client. We may add here a detail which, like many others no doubt, will seem otiose in countries where there is no longer any need of precaution. The name of Fabrizio del Dongo was never written; all the letters that were intended for him were addressed to Lodovico San Micheli; at Locarno in Switzer-

land, or at Belgirate in Piedmont. The envelope was made of a coarse paper, the seal carelessly applied, the address barely legible and sometimes adorned with recommendations worthy of a cook; all the letters were dated from Naples six days before their actual date.

From the Piedmontese village of San Nazzaro, near Pavia, Lodovico returned in hot haste to Parma; he was charged with a mission to which Fabrizio attached the greatest importance; this was nothing less than to convey to Clelia Conti a handkerchief on which was printed a sonnet of Petrarch. It is true that a word was altered in this sonnet: Clelia found it on the table two days after she had received the thanks of the Marchese Crescenzi, who professed himself the happiest of men; and there is no need to say what impression this token of a still constant remembrance produced on her heart.

Lodovico was to try to procure all possible details as to what was happening at the citadel. He it was who told Fabrizio the sad news that the Marchese Crescenzi's marriage seemed now to be definitely settled; scarcely a day passed without his giving a *festa* for Clelia, inside the citadel. A decisive proof of the marriage was that the Marchese, immensely rich and in consequence very avaricious, as is the custom among the opulent people of Northern Italy, was making immense preparations, and yet he was marrying a girl without a *portion*. It was true that General Fabio Conti, his vanity greatly shocked by this observation, the first to spring to the minds of all his compatriots, had just bought a property worth more than 300,000 francs, and for this property he, who had nothing, had paid in ready money, evidently with the Marchese's gold. Moreover, the General had said that he was giving this property to his daughter on her marriage. But the charges for the documents and other matters, which amounted to more than 12,000 francs, seemed

a most ridiculous waste of money to the Marchese, a man of eminently logical mind. For his part he was having woven at Lyons a set of magnificent tapestries of admirably blended colours, calculated to charm the eye, by the famous Pallagi, the Bolognese painter. These tapestries, each of which embodied some deed of arms by the Crescenzi family, which, as the whole world knows, is descended from the famous Crescentius, Roman Consul in the year 985, were to furnish the seventeen saloons which composed the ground floor of the Marchese's *palazzo*. The tapestries, clocks and lustres sent to Parma cost more than 350,000 francs; the price of the new mirrors, in addition to those which the house already possessed, came to 200,000 francs. With the exception of two rooms, famous works of the Parmigianino, the greatest of local painters after the divine Correggio, all those of the first and second floors were now occupied by the leading painters of Florence, Rome and Milan, who were decorating them with paintings in fresco. Fokelberg, the great Swedish sculptor, Tenerani of Rome and Marchesi of Milan had been at work for the last year on ten bas-reliefs representing as many brave deeds of Crescentius, that truly great man. The majority of the ceilings, painted in fresco, also offered some allusion to his life. The ceiling most generally admired was that on which Hayez of Milan had represented Crescentius being received in the Elysian Fields by Francesco Sforza, Lorenzo the Magnificent, King Robert, the Tribune Cola di Rienzi, Machiavelli, Dante and the other great men of the middle ages. Admiration for these chosen spirits is supposed to be an epigram at the expense of the men in power.

All these sumptuous details occupied the exclusive attention of the nobility and burgesses of Parma, and pierced our hero's heart when he read of them, related with an

artless admiration, in a long letter of more than twenty pages which Lodovico had dictated to a *doganiere* of Casalmaggiore.

"And I, who am so poor!" said Fabrizio, "an income of four thousand lire in all and for all! It is truly an impertinence in me to dare to be in love with Clelia Conti for whom all these miracles are being performed."

A single paragraph in Lodovico's long letter, but written, this, in his own villainous hand, announced to his master that he had met, at night and apparently in hiding, the unfortunate Grillo, his former gaoler, who had been put in prison and then released. The man had asked him for a sequin in charity, and Lodovico had given him four in the Duchessa's name. The old gaolers recently set at liberty, twelve in number, were preparing an entertainment with their knives (*un trattamento di cortellate*) for the new gaolers their successors, should they ever succeed in meeting them outside the citadel. Grillo had said that almost every day there was a serenade at the fortress, that Signorina Clelia was extremely pale, often ill, and *other things of the sort.* This absurd expression caused Lodovico to receive, by courier after courier, the order to return to Locarno. He returned, and the details which he supplied by word of mouth were even more depressing for Fabrizio.

One may judge what consideration he was shewing for the poor Duchessa; he would have suffered a thousand deaths rather than utter in her hearing the name of Clelia Conti. The Duchessa abhorred Parma; whereas, for Fabrizio, everything which recalled that city was at once sublime and touching.

Less than ever had the Duchessa forgotten her revenge; she had been so happy before the incident of Giletti's death—and now, what a fate was hers! She was living in expectation of a dire event of which she was

careful not to say a word to Fabrizio, she who before, at the time of her arrangement with Ferrante, thought she would so delight Fabrizio by telling him that one day he would be avenged.

One can now form some idea of the pleasantness of Fabrizio's conversations with the Duchessa: a gloomy silence reigned almost invariably between them. To enhance the pleasantness of their relations, the Duchessa had yielded to the temptation to play a trick on this too dear nephew. The Conte wrote to her almost every day; evidently he was sending couriers as in the days of their infatuation, for his letters always bore the postmark of some little town in Switzerland. The poor man was torturing his mind so as not to speak too openly of his affection, and to construct amusing letters; barely did a distracted eye glance over them. What avails, alas, the fidelity of a respected lover when one's heart is pierced by the coldness of the other whom one sets above him?

In the space of two months the Duchessa answered him only once, and that was to engage him to explore how the land lay round the Princess, and to see whether, despite the impertinence of the fireworks, a letter from her, the Duchessa, would be received with pleasure. The letter which he was to present, if he thought fit, requested the post of *Cavaliere d'onore* to the Princess, which had recently fallen vacant, for the Marchese Crescenzi, and desired that it should be conferred upon him in consideration of his marriage. The Duchessa's letter was a masterpiece; it was a message of the most tender respect, expressed in the best possible terms; the writer had not admitted to this courtly style a single word the consequences, even the remotest consequences of which could be other than agreeable to the Princess. The reply also breathed a tender friendship, which was being tortured by the absence of its recipient.

"My son and I," the Princess told her, "have not spent one evening that could be called tolerable since your sudden departure. Does my dear Duchessa no longer remember that it was she who caused me to be consulted in the nomination of the officers of my household? Does she then think herself obliged to give me reasons for the Marchese's appointment, as if the expression of her desire was not for me the chief of reasons? The Marchese shall have the post, if I can do anything; and there will always be one in my heart, and that the first, for my dear Duchessa. My son employs absolutely the same expressions, a little strong perhaps on the lips of a great boy of one-and-twenty, and asks you for specimens of the minerals of the Val d'Orta, near Belgirate. You may address your letters, which will, I hope, be frequent, to the Conte, who still adores you and who is especially dear to me on account of these sentiments. The Archbishop also has remained faithful to you. We all hope to see you again one day: remember that it is your duty. The Marchesa Ghisleri, my Grand Mistress, is preparing to leave this world for a better: the poor woman has done me much harm; she displeases me still further by departing so inopportunely; her illness makes me think of the name which I should once have set with so much pleasure in the place of hers, if, that is, I could have obtained that sacrifice of her independence from that matchless woman who, in fleeing from us, has taken with her all the joy of my little court," and so forth.

It was therefore with the consciousness of having sought to hasten, so far as it lay in her power, the marriage which was filling Fabrizio with despair, that the Duchessa saw him every day. And so they spent sometimes four or five hours in drifting together over the lake, without exchanging a single word. The good feeling was entire

and perfect on Fabrizio's part; but he was thinking of other things, and his innocent and simple nature furnished him with nothing to say. The Duchessa saw this, and it was her punishment.

We have forgotten to mention in the proper place that the Duchessa had taken a house at Belgirate, a charming village and one that contains everything which its name promises (to wit a beautiful bend in the lake). From the window-sill of her drawing-room, the Duchessa could set foot in her boat. She had taken a quite simple one for which four rowers would have sufficed; she engaged twelve, and arranged things so as to have a man from each of the villages situated in the neighbourhood of Belgirate. The third or fourth time that she found herself in the middle of the lake with all of these well chosen men, she stopped the movement of their oars.

"I regard you all as friends," she said to them, "and I wish to confide a secret in you. My nephew Fabrizio has escaped from prison; and possibly by treachery they will seek to recapture him, although he is on your lake, in a place of freedom. Keep your ears open, and inform me of all that you may hear. I authorise you to enter my room by day or night."

The rowers replied with enthusiasm; she knew how to make herself loved. But she did not think that there was any question of recapturing Fabrizio: it was for herself that all these precautions were taken, and, before the fatal order to open the reservoir of the *palazzo* Sanseverina, she would not have dreamed of them.

Her prudence had led her also to take an apartment at the port of Locarno for Fabrizio; every day he came to see her, or she herself crossed into Switzerland. One may judge of the pleasantness of their perpetual companionship by the following detail. The Marchesa and her daughter came twice to see them, and the presence of

these strangers gave them pleasure; for, in spite of the ties of blood, we may call "stranger" a person who knows nothing of our dearest interests and whom we see but once in a year.

The Duchessa happened to be one evening at Locarno, in Fabrizio's rooms, with the Marchesa and her two daughters. The Archpriest of the place and the curate had come to pay their respects to these ladies: the Archpriest, who had an interest in a business house, and kept closely in touch with the news, was inspired to announce:

"The Prince of Parma is dead!"

The Duchessa turned extremely pale; she had barely the strength to say:

"Do they give any details?"

"No," replied the Archpriest; "the report is confined to the announcement of his death, which is certain."

The Duchessa looked at Fabrizio. "I have done this for him," she said to herself; "I would have done things a thousand times worse, and there he is standing before me indifferent, and dreaming of another!" It was beyond the Duchessa's strength to endure this frightful thought; she fell in a dead faint. Everyone hastened to her assistance; but, on coming to herself, she observed that Fabrizio was less active than the Archpriest and curate; he was dreaming as usual.

"He is thinking of returning to Parma," the Duchessa told herself, "and perhaps of breaking off Clelia's marriage to the Marchese; but I shall manage to prevent him." Then, remembering the presence of the two priests, she made haste to add:

"He was a good Prince, and has been greatly maligned! It is an immense loss for us!"

The priests took their leave, and the Duchessa, to be alone, announced that she was going to bed.

"No doubt," she said to herself, "prudence ordains that

I should wait a month or two before returning to Parma; but I feel that I shall never have the patience; I am suffering too keenly here. Fabrizio's continual dreaming, his silence, are an intolerable spectacle for my heart. Who would ever have said that I should find it tedious to float on this charming lake, alone with him, and at the moment when I have done, to avenge him, more than I can tell him! After such a spectacle, death is nothing. It is now that I am paying for the transports of happiness and childish joy which I found in my *palazzo* at Parma when I welcomed Fabrizio there on his return from Naples. If I had said a word, all was at an end, and it may be that, tied to me, he would not have given a thought to that little Clelia; but that word filled me with a horrible repugnance. Now she has prevailed over me. What more simple? She is twenty; and I, altered by my anxieties, sick, I am twice her age! . . . I must die, I must make an end of things! A woman of forty is no longer anything save to the men who have loved her in her youth! Now I shall find nothing more but the pleasures of vanity; and are they worth the trouble of living? All the more reason for going to Parma, and amusing myself. If things took a certain turn, I should lose my life. Well, where is the harm? I shall make a magnificent death, and, before the end, but then only, I shall say to Fabrizio: 'Wretch! It is for you!' Yes, I can find no occupation for what little life remains to me save at Parma. I shall play the great lady there. What a blessing if I could be sensible now of all those distinctions which used to make the Raversi so unhappy! Then, in order to see my happiness, I had to look into the eyes of envy. . . . My vanity has one satisfaction; with the exception of the Conte perhaps, no one can have guessed what the event was that put an end to the life of my heart. . . . I shall love Fabrizio, I shall be devoted to his interests; but he must not be allowed to

break off Clelia's marriage, and end by taking her himself. . . . No, that shall not be!"

The Duchessa had reached this point in her melancholy monologue, when she heard a great noise in the house.

"Good!" she said to herself, "they are coming to arrest me; Ferrante has let himself be caught, he must have spoken. Well, all the better! I am going to have an occupation, I am going to fight them for my head. But in the first place, I must not let myself be taken."

The Duchessa, half clad, fled to the bottom of her garden: she was already thinking of climbing a low wall and escaping across country; but she saw someone enter her room. She recognised Bruno, the Conte's confidential man; he was alone with her maid. She went up to the window. The man was telling her maid of the injuries he had received. The Duchessa entered the house. Bruno almost flung himself at her feet, imploring her not to tell the Conte of the preposterous hour at which he had arrived.

"Immediately after the Prince's death," he went on, "the Signor Conte gave the order to all the posts not to supply horses to subjects of the States of Parma. So that I had to go as far as the Po with the horses of the house, but on leaving the boat my carriage was overturned, broken, smashed, and I had such bad bruises that I could not get on a horse, as was my duty."

"Very well," said the Duchessa, "it is three o'clock in the morning: I shall say that you arrived at noon; but you must not go and give me away."

"I am very grateful for the Signora's kindness."

Politics in a work of literature are like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

We are about to speak of very ugly matters, as to which, for more than one reason, we should like to keep silence; but we are forced to do so in order to come to happenings which are in our province, since they have for their theatre the hearts of our characters.

"But, great God, how did that great Prince die?" said the Duchessa to Bruno.

"He was out shooting the birds of passage, in the marshes, along by the Po, two leagues from Sacca. He fell into a hole hidden by a tuft of grass; he was all in a sweat, and caught cold; they carried him to a lonely house where he died in a few hours. Some say that Signor Catena and Signor Borone are dead as well, and that the whole accident arose from the copper pans in the *contadino's* house they went to, which were full of verdigris. They took their luncheon there. In fact, the swelled heads, the Jacobins, who say what they would like to be true, speak of poison. I know that my friend Toto, who is a groom at court, would have died but for the kind attention of a rustic who appeared to have a great knowledge of medicine, and gave him some very singular remedies. But they've ceased to talk of the Prince's death already; after all, he was a cruel man. When I left, the people were gathering to kill the Fiscal General Rassi: they were also proposing to set fire to the gates of the citadel, to enable the prisoners to escape. But it was said that Fabio Conti would fire his guns. Others were positive that the gunners at the citadel had poured water on their powder, and refused to massacre their fellow-citizens. But I can tell you something far more interesting: while the surgeon of Sandolaro was mending my poor arm, a man arrived from Parma who said that the mob had caught Barbone, the famous clerk from the citadel, in the street, and had beaten him, and were then going to hang him from the tree on the avenue nearest to the citadel.

The mob were marching to break that fine statue of the Prince in the gardens of the court; but the Signor Conte took a battalion of the Guard, paraded them in front of the statue, and sent word to the people that no one who entered the gardens would go out of them alive, and the people took fright. But, what is a very curious thing, which the man who had come from Parma, who is an old constable, repeated several times, is that the Signor Conte kicked General P——, the commander of the Prince's Guard, and had him led out of the garden by two fusiliers, after tearing off his epaulettes."

"I can see the Conte doing that," cried the Duchessa with a transport of joy which she would not have believed possible a minute earlier: "he will never allow anyone to insult our Princess; and as for General P——, in his devotion to his rightful masters, he would never consent to serve the usurper, while the Conte, with less delicacy, fought through all the Spanish campaigns, and has often been reproached for it at court."

The Duchessa had opened the Conte's letter, but kept stopping as she read it to put a hundred questions to Bruno.

The letter was very pleasant; the Conte employed the most lugubrious terms, and yet the keenest joy broke out in every word; he avoided any detail of the Prince's death, and ended with the words:

"You will doubtless return, my dear angel, but I advise you to wait a day or two for the courier whom the Princess will send you, as I hope, to-day or to-morrow; your return must be as triumphant as your departure was bold. As for the great criminal who is with you, I count upon being able to have him tried by twelve judges selected from all parties in this State. But, to have the monster punished as he de-

serves, I must first be able to make spills of the other sentence, if it exists."

The Conte had opened his letter to add:

"Now for a very different matter: I have just issued ammunition to the two battalions of the Guard; I am going to fight, and shall do my best to deserve the title of Cruel with which the Liberals have so long honoured me. That old mummy General P—— has dared to speak in the barracks of making a parley with the populace, who are more or less in revolt. I write to you from the street; I am going to the Palace, which they shall not enter save over my dead body. Good-bye! If I die, it will be worshipping you *all the same*, as I have lived. Do not forget to draw three hundred thousand francs which are deposited in my name with D—— of Lyons.

"Here is that poor devil Rassi, pale as death, and without his wig; you have no idea what he looks like. The people are absolutely determined to hang him; it would be doing him a great injustice, he deserves to be quartered. He took refuge in my *palazzo* and has run after me into the street; I hardly know what to do with him. . . . I do not wish to take him to the Prince's Palace, that would make the revolt break out there. F—— shall see whether I love him; my first word to Rassi was: I must have the sentence passed on Signor del Dongo, and all the copies that you may have of it; and say to all those unjust judges, who are the cause of this revolt, that I will have them all hanged, and you as well, my dear friend, if they breathe a word of that sentence, which never existed. In Fabrizio's name, I am sending a company of grenadiers to the Archbishop. Good-

bye, dear angel! My *palazzo* is going to be burned, and I shall lose the charming portraits I have of you. I must run to the Palace to degrade that wretched General P——, who is at his tricks; he is basely flattering the people, as he used to flatter the late Prince. All these Generals are in the devil of a fright; I am going, I think, to have myself made Commander in Chief."

The Duchessa was unkind enough not to send to waken Fabrizio; she felt for the Conte a burst of admiration which was closely akin to love. "When all is said and done," she decided, "I shall have to marry him." She wrote to him at once and sent off one of her men. That night the Duchessa had no time to be unhappy.

Next day, about noon, she saw a boat manned by ten rowers which was swiftly cleaving the waters of the lake; Fabrizio and she soon recognised a man wearing the livery of the Prince of Parma: it was, in fact, one of his couriers who, before landing, cried to the Duchessa: "The revolt is suppressed!" This courier gave her several letters from the Conte, an admirable letter from the Princess, and an order from Prince Ranuccio-Ernesto V, on parchment, creating her Duchessa di San Giovanni and Grand Mistress to the Princess Dowager. The young Prince, an expert in mineralogy, whom she regarded as an imbecile, had had the intelligence to write her a little note; but there was love at the end of it. The note began thus:

"The Conte says, Signora Duchessa, that he is pleased with me; the fact is that I stood under fire by his side, and that my horse was hit: seeing the stir that is made about so small a matter, I am keen to take part in a real battle, but not against my

subjects. I owe everything to the Conte; all my Generals, who have never been to war, ran like hares; I believe two or three have fled as far as Bologna. Since a great and deplorable event set me in power, I have signed no order which has given me so much pleasure as this which appoints you Grand Mistress to my mother. My mother and I both remembered a day when you admired the fine view one has from the *palazzetto* of San Giovanni, which once belonged to Petrarch, or so they say at least; my mother wished to give you that little property: and I, not knowing what to give you, and not venturing to offer you all that is rightly yours, have made you Duchessa in my country; I do not know whether you are learned enough in these matters to be aware that Sanseverina is a Roman title. I have just given the Grand Cordon of my Order to our worthy Archbishop, who has shown a firmness very rare in men of seventy. You will not be angry with me for having recalled all the ladies from exile. I am told that I must now sign only after writing the words *your affectionate;* it annoys me that I should be made to scatter broadcast what is completely true only when I write to you.

*"Your affectionate*

"Ranuccio-Ernesto."

Who would not have said, from such language, that the Duchessa was about to enjoy the highest favour? And yet she found something very strange in other letters from the Conte, which she received an hour or two later. He offered no special reason, but advised her to postpone for some days her return to Parma, and to write to the Princess that she was seriously unwell. The Duchessa and Fabrizio set off, nevertheless, for Parma immediately after

dinner. The Duchessa's object, which however she did not admit to herself, was to hasten the Marchese Crescenzi's marriage; Fabrizio, for his part, spent the journey in wild transports of joy, which seemed to his aunt absurd. He was in hopes of seeing Clelia again soon; he fully counted upon carrying her off, against her will, if there should be no other way of preventing her marriage.

The Duchessa and her nephew made a very gay journey. At a post before Parma, Fabrizio stopped for a minute to change into the ecclesiastical habit; ordinarily he dressed as a layman in mourning. When he returned to the Duchessa's room:

"I find something suspicious and inexplicable," she said to him, "in the Conte's letters. If you would take my advice you would spend a few hours here; I shall send you a courier after I have spoken to that great Minister."

It was with great reluctance that Fabrizio consented to accept this sensible warning. Transports of joy worthy of a boy of fifteen were the note of the reception which the Conte gave to the Duchessa, whom he called his wife. It was long before he would speak of politics, and when at last they came down to cold reason:

"You did very well to prevent Fabrizio from arriving officially; we are in the full swing of reaction here. Just guess the colleague that the Prince has given me as Minister of Justice! Rassi, my dear, Rassi, whom I treated like the ruffian that he is, on the day of our great adventure. By the way, I must warn you that we have suppressed everything that has happened here. If you read our *Gazette* you will see that a clerk at the citadel, named Barbone, has died as the result of falling from a carriage. As for the sixty odd rascals whom I dispatched with powder and shot, when they were attacking the Prince's

statue in the gardens, they are in the best of health, only they are travelling abroad. Conte Zurla, the Minister of the Interior, has gone in person to the house of each of these unfortunate heroes, and has handed fifteen sequins to his family or his friends, with the order to say that the deceased is abroad, and a very definite threat of imprisonment should they let it be understood that he is dead. A man from my own Ministry, the Foreign Office, has been sent on a mission to the journalists of Milan and Turin, so that they shall not speak of the *unfortunate event*—that is the recognised expression; he is to go on to Paris and London, to insert a correction in all the newspapers, semi-officially, of anything that they may say about our troubles. Another agent has posted off to Bologna and Florence. I have shrugged my shoulders.

"But the delightful thing, at my age, is that I felt a moment of enthusiasm when I was speaking to the soldiers of the Guard, and when I tore the epaulettes off that contemptible General P——. At that moment, I would have given my life, without hesitating, for the Prince: I admit now that it would have been a very stupid way of ending it. To-day the Prince, excellent young fellow as he is, would give a hundred scudi to see me die in my bed; he has not yet dared to ask for my resignation, but we speak to each other as seldom as possible, and I send him a number of little reports in writing, as I used to do with the late Prince, after Fabrizio's imprisonment. By the way, I have not yet made spills out of the sentence they passed on Fabrizio, for the simple reason that that scoundrel Rassi has not let me have it. So you are very wise to prevent Fabrizio from arriving here officially. The sentence still holds good; at the same time I do not think that Rassi would dare to have our nephew arrested now, but it is possible that he will in another fortnight.

If Fabrizio absolutely insists on returning to town, let him come and stay with me."

"But the reason for all this?" cried the Duchessa in astonishment.

"They have persuaded the Prince that I am giving myself the airs of a dictator and a saviour of the country, and that I wish to lead him about like a boy; what is more, in speaking of him, I seem to have uttered the fatal words: *that boy*. It may be so, I was excited that day; for instance, I looked on him as a great man, because he was not unduly frightened by the first shots he had ever heard fired in his life. He is not lacking in spirit, indeed he has a better tone than his father; in fact, I cannot repeat it too often, in his heart of hearts he is honest and good; but that sincere and youthful heart shudders when they tell him of any dastardly trick, and he thinks he must have a very dark soul himself to notice such things: think of the upbringing he has had!"

"Your Excellency ought to have remembered that one day he would be master, and to have placed an intelligent man with him."

"For one thing, we have the example of the Abbé de Condillac, who, when appointed by the Marchese di Felino, my predecessor, could make nothing more of his pupil than a King of fools. He succeeded in due course, and, in 1796, he had not the sense to treat with General Bonaparte, who would have tripled the area of his States. In the second place, I never expected to remain Minister for ten years in succession. Now that I have lost all interest in the business, as I have for the last month, I intend to amass a million before leaving this bedlam I have rescued to its own devices. But for me, Parma would have been a Republic for two months, with the poet Ferrante Palla as Dictator."

This made the Duchessa blush; the Conte knew nothing of what had happened.

"We are going to fall back into the ordinary Monarchy of the eighteenth century; the confessor and the mistress. At heart the Prince cares for nothing but mineralogy, and perhaps yourself, Signora. Since he began to reign, his valet, whose brother I have just made a captain, this brother having nine months' service, his valet, I say, has gone and stuffed into his head that he ought to be the happiest of men because his profile is going to appear on the scudi. This bright idea has been followed by boredom.

"What he now needs is an aide-de-camp, as a remedy for boredom. Well, even if he were to offer me that famous million which is necessary for us to live comfortably in Naples or Paris, I would not be his remedy for boredom, and spend four or five hours every day with His Highness. Besides, as I have more brains than he, at the end of a month he would regard me as a monster.

"The late Prince was evil-minded and jealous, but he had been on service and had commanded army corps, which had given him a bearing; he had the stuff in him of which Princes are made, and I could be his Minister, for better or worse. With this honest fellow of a son, who is candid and really good, I am forced to be an intriguer. You see me now the rival of the humblest little woman in the Castle, and a very inferior rival, for I shall scorn all the hundred essential details. For instance, three days ago, one of those women who put out the clean towels every morning in the rooms, took it into her head to make the Prince lose the key of one of his English desks. Whereupon His Highness refused to deal with any of the business the papers of which happened to be in this desk; as a matter of fact, for twenty francs, they could have taken

off the wooden bottom, or used skeleton keys; but Ranuccio-Ernesto V told me that that would be teaching the court locksmith bad habits.

"Up to the present, it has been absolutely impossible for him to adhere to any decision for three days running. If he had been born Marchese so-and-so, with an ample fortune, this young Prince would have been one of the most estimable men at court, a sort of Louis XVI; but how, with his pious simplicity, is he to resist all the cunningly laid snares that surround him? And so the drawing-room of your enemy the Marchesa Raversi is more powerful than ever; they have discovered there that I, who gave the order to fire on the people, and was determined to kill three thousand men if necessary, rather than let them outrage the statue of the Prince who had been my master, am a red-hot Liberal, that I wished him to sign a Constitution, and a hundred such absurdities. With all this talk of a Republic, the fools would prevent us from enjoying the best of Monarchies. In short, Signora, you are the only member of the present Liberal Party of which my enemies make me the head, at whose expense the Prince has not expressed himself in offensive terms; the Archbishop, always perfectly honest, for having spoken in reasonable language of what I did on *the unhappy day,* is in deep disgrace.

"On the morrow of the day which was not then called *unhappy,* when it was still true that the revolt had existed, the Prince told the Archbishop that, so that you should not have to take an inferior title on marrying me, he would make me a Duca. To-day I fancy that it is Rassi, ennobled by me when he sold me the late Prince's secrets, who is going to be made Conte. In the face of such a promotion as that, I shall cut a sorry figure."

"And the poor Prince will bespatter himself with mud."

"No doubt; but after all he is *master,* a position which,

in less than a fortnight, makes the *ridiculous* element disappear. So, dear Duchessa, as at the game of tric-trac, *let us get out.*"

"But we shall not be exactly rich."

"After all, neither you nor I have any need of luxury. If you give me, at Naples, a seat in a box at San Carlo and a horse, I am more than satisfied; it will never be the amount of luxury with which we live that will give you and me our position, it is the pleasure which the intelligent people of the place may perhaps find in coming to take a dish of tea with you."

"But," the Duchessa went on, "what would have happened, on the *unhappy day,* if you had held aloof, as I hope you will in future?"

"The troops would have fraternised with the people, there would have been three days of bloodshed and incendiarism (for it would take a hundred years in this country for the Republic to be anything more than an absurdity), then a fortnight of pillage, until two or three regiments supplied from abroad came to put a stop to it. Ferrante Palla was in the thick of the crowd, full of courage and raging as usual; he had probably a dozen friends who were acting in collusion with him, which Rassi will make into a superb conspiracy. One thing certain is that, wearing an incredibly dilapidated coat, he was scattering gold with both hands."

The Duchessa, bewildered by all this information, went in haste to thank the Princess.

As she entered the room the Lady of the Bedchamber handed her a little gold key, which is worn in the belt, and is the badge of supreme authority in the part of the Palace which belongs to the Princess. Clara-Paolina hastened to dismiss all the company; and, once she was alone with her friend, persisted for some moments in giving only

fragmentary explanations. The Duchessa found it hard to understand what she meant, and answered only with considerable reserve. At length the Princess burst into tears, and, flinging herself into the Duchessa's arms, cried: "The days of my misery are going to begin again; my son will treat me worse than his father did!"

"That is what I shall prevent," the Duchessa replied with emphasis. "But first of all," she went on, "I must ask Your Serene Highness to deign to accept this offering of all my gratitude and my profound respect."

"What do you mean?" cried the Princess, full of uneasiness, and fearing a resignation.

"I ask that whenever Your Serene Highness shall permit me to turn to the right the head of that nodding mandarin on her chimneypiece, she will permit me also to call things by their true names."

"Is that all, my dear Duchessa?" cried Clara-Paolina, rising from her seat and hastening herself to put the mandarin's head in the right position: "speak then, with the utmost freedom, Signora Maggiordoma," she said in a charming tone.

"Ma'am," the Duchessa went on, "Your Highness has grasped the situation perfectly; you and I are both running the greatest risk; the sentence passed on Fabrizio has not been quashed; consequently, on the day when they wish to rid themselves of me and to insult you, they will put him back in prison. Our position is as bad as ever. As for me personally, I am marrying the Conte, and we are going to set up house in Naples or Paris. The final stroke of ingratitude of which the Conte is at this moment the victim has entirely disgusted him with public life, and but for the interest Your Serene Highness takes in him, I should advise him to remain in this mess only on condition of the Prince's giving him an enormous sum. I shall ask leave of Your Highness to explain that the Conte,

who had 130,000 francs when he came into office, has today an income of barely 20,000 lire. In vain did I long urge him to think of his pocket. In my absence, he has picked a quarrel with the Prince's Farmers-General, who were rascals; he has replaced them with other rascals, who have given him 800,000 francs."

"What!" cried the Princess in astonishment; "Heavens, I am extremely annoyed to hear that!"

"Ma'am," replied the Duchessa with the greatest coolness, "must I turn the mandarin's head back to the left?"

"Good heavens, no," exclaimed the Princess; "but I am annoyed that a man of the Conte's character should have thought of enriching himself in such a way."

"But for this peculation he would be despised by all the honest folk."

"Great heavens! Is it possible?"

"Ma'am," went on the Duchessa, "except for my friend, the Marchese Crescenzi, who has an income of three or four hundred thousand lire, everyone here steals; and how should they not steal in a country where the recognition of the greatest services lasts for not quite a month? It means that there is nothing real, nothing that survives disgrace, save money. I am going to take the liberty, Ma'am, of saying some terrible truths."

"You have my permission," said the Princess with a deep sigh, "and yet they are painfully unpleasant to me."

"Very well, Ma'am, the Prince your son, a perfectly honest man, is capable of making you far more unhappy than his father ever did; the late Prince was a man of character more or less like everyone else. Our present Sovereign is not sure of wishing the same thing for three days on end, and so, in order that one may make sure

of him, one must live continually with him and not allow him to speak to anyone. As this truth is not very difficult to guess, the new Ultra Party, ruled by those two excellent heads, Rassi and the Marchesa Raversi, are going to try to provide the Prince with a mistress. This mistress will have permission to make her own fortune and to distribute various minor posts; but she will have to answer to the Party for the constancy of the master's will.

"I, to be properly established at Your Highness's court, require that Rassi be exiled and degraded; I desire, in addition, that Fabrizio be tried by the most honest judges that can be found: if these gentlemen admit, as I hope, that he is innocent, it will be natural to grant the petition of His Grace the Archbishop that Fabrizio shall be his Coadjutor with eventual succession. If I fail, the Conte and I retire; in that case, I leave this parting advice with Your Serene Highness: she must never pardon Rassi, nor must she ever leave her son's States. While she is with him, that worthy son will never do her any serious harm."

"I have followed your arguments with the close attention they require," the Princess replied, smiling; "ought I, then, to take upon myself the responsibility of providing my son with a mistress?"

"Not at all, Ma'am, but see first of all that your drawing-room is the only one which he finds amusing."

The conversation on this topic was endless, the scales fell from the eyes of the innocent and intelligent Princess.

One of the Duchessa's couriers went to tell Fabrizio that he might enter the town, but must hide himself. He was barely noticed: he spent his time disguised as a *contadino* in the wooden booth of a chestnut-seller, erected opposite the gate of the citadel, beneath the trees of the avenue.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE Duchessa arranged a series of charming evenings at the Palace, which had never seen such gaiety: never had she been more delightful than during this winter, and yet she was living in the midst of the greatest dangers; but at the same time, during this critical period, it so happened that she did not think twice with any appreciable regret of the strange alteration in Fabrizio. The young Prince used to appear very early at his mother's parties, where she always said to him:

"Away with you and govern; I wager there are at least a score of reports on your desk awaiting a definite answer, and I do not wish to have the rest of Europe accuse me of making you a mere figurehead in order to reign in your place."

These counsels had the disadvantage of being offered always at the most inopportune moments, that is to say when His Highness, having overcome his timidity, was taking part in some acted charade which amused him greatly. Twice a week there were parties in the country to which on the pretext of winning for the new Sovereign the affection of his people, the Princess admitted the prettiest women of the middle classes. The Duchessa, who was the life and soul of this joyous court, hoped that these handsome women, all of whom looked with a mortal envy on the great prosperity of the burgess Rassi, would inform the Prince of some of the countless rascalities of that Minister. For, among other childish ideas, the Prince claimed to have a *moral* Ministry.

Rassi had too much sense not to feel how dangerous these brilliant evenings at the Princess's court, with his enemy in command of them, were to himself. He had not chosen to return to Conte Mosca the perfectly legal sentence passed on Fabrizio; it was inevitable therefore that either the Duchessa or he must vanish from the court.

On the day of that popular movement, the existence of which it was now in good taste to deny, someone had distributed money among the populace. Rassi started from that point: worse dressed even than was his habit, he climbed to the most wretched attics in the town, and spent whole hours in serious conversation with their needy inhabitants. He was well rewarded for all his trouble: after a fortnight of this kind of life he had acquired the certainty that Ferrante Palla had been the secret head of the insurrection, and furthermore, that this creature, a pauper all his life as a great poet would be, had sent nine or ten diamonds to be sold at Genoa.

Among others were mentioned five valuable stones which were really worth more than 40,000 francs, and which, *ten days before the death of the Prince,* had been sacrificed for 35,000 francs, because, the vendor said, *he was in need of money.*

What words can describe the rapture of the Minister of Justice on making this discovery? He had learned that every day he was being made a laughing stock at the court of the Princess Dowager, and on several occasions the Prince, when discussing business with him, laughed in his face with all the frankness of his youth. It must be admitted that Rassi had some singularly plebeian habits: for instance, as soon as a discussion began to interest him, he would cross his legs and take his foot in his hand; if the interest increased, he would spread his red cotton handkerchief over his knee, and so forth. The Prince had

laughed heartily at the wit of one of the prettiest women of the middle class, who, being aware incidentally that she had a very shapely leg, had begun to imitate this elegant gesture of the Minister of Justice.

Rassi requested an extraordinary audience and said to the Prince:

"Would Your Highness be willing to give a hundred thousand francs to know definitely in what manner his august father met his death? With that sum, the authorities would be in a position to arrest the guilty parties, if such exist."

The Prince's reply left no room for doubt.

A little while later, Cecchina informed the Duchessa that she had been offered a large sum to allow her mistress's diamonds to be examined by a jeweller; she had indignantly refused. The Duchessa scolded her for having refused; and, a week later, Cecchina had the diamonds to shew. On the day appointed for this exhibition of the diamonds, the Conte posted a couple of trustworthy men at every jeweller's in Parma, and towards midnight he came to tell the Duchessa that the inquisitive jeweller was none other than Rassi's brother. The Duchessa, who was very gay that evening (they were playing at the Palace a *commedia dell'arte,* that is to say one in which each character invents the dialogue as he goes on, only the plot of the play being posted up in the green-room), the Duchessa, who was playing a part, had as her lover in the piece Conte Baldi, the former friend of the Marchesa Raversi, who was present. The Prince, the shyest man in his States, but an extremely good looking youth and one endowed with the tenderest of hearts, was studying Conte Baldi's part, which he intended to take at the second performance.

"I have very little time," the Duchessa told the Conte;

"I am appearing in the first scene of the second act: let us go into the guard-room."

There, surrounded by a score of the body-guard, all wide awake and closely attentive to the conversation between the Prime Minister and the Grand Mistress, the Duchessa said with a laugh to her friend:

"You always scold me when I tell you unnecessary secrets. It was I who summoned Ernesto V to the throne; it was a question of avenging Fabrizio, whom I loved then far more than I do to-day, although always quite innocently. I know very well that you have little belief in my innocence, but that does not matter, since you love me in spite of my crimes. Very well, here is a real crime: I gave all my diamonds to a sort of lunatic, a most interesting man, named Ferrante Palla, I even kissed him so that he should destroy the man who wished to have Fabrizio poisoned. Where is the harm in that?"

"Ah! So that is where Ferrante had found money for his rising!" said the Conte, slightly taken aback; "and you tell me all this in the guard-room!"

"It is because I am in a hurry, and now Rassi is on the track of the crime. It is quite true that I never mentioned an insurrection, for I abhor Jacobins. Think it over, and let me have your advice after the play."

"I will tell you at once that you must make the Prince fall in love with you. But perfectly honourably, please."

The Duchessa was called to return to the stage. She fled.

Some days later the Duchessa received by post a long and ridiculous letter, signed with the name of a former maid of her own; the woman asked to be employed at the court, but the Duchessa had seen from the first glance that the letter was neither in her handwriting nor in her style. On opening the sheet to read the second page, she saw fall at her feet a little miraculous image of the

Madonna, folded in a printed leaf from an old book. After glancing at the image, the Duchessa read a few lines of the printed page. Her eyes shone, she found on it these words:

"The Tribune has taken one hundred francs monthly, not more; with the rest it was decided to rekindle the sacred fire in souls which had become frozen by selfishness. The fox is upon my track, that is why I have not sought to see for the last time the adored being. I said to myself, she does not love the Republic, she who is superior to me in mind as well as by her graces and her beauty. Besides, how is one to create a Republic without Republicans? Can I be mistaken? In six months I shall visit, microscope in hand, and on foot, the small towns of America, I shall see whether I ought still to love the sole rival that you have in my heart. If you receive this letter, Signora Baronessa, and no profane eye has read it before yours, tell them to break one of the young ash trees planted twenty paces from the spot where I dared to speak to you for the first time. I shall then have buried, under the great box tree in the garden to which you called attention once in my happy days, a box in which will be found some of those things which lead to the slandering of people of my way of thinking. You may be sure that I should have taken care not to write if the fox were not on my track, and there were not a risk of his reaching that heavenly being; examine the box tree in a fortnight's time."

"Since he has a printing press at his command," the Duchessa said to herself, "we shall soon have a volume of sonnets; heaven knows what name he will give me!"

The Duchessa's coquetry led her to make a venture; for a week she was indisposed, and the court had no more

pleasant evenings. The Princess, greatly shocked by all that her fear of her son was obliging her to do in the first moments of her widowhood, went to spend this week in a convent attached to the church in which the late Prince was buried. This interruption of the evening parties threw upon the Prince an enormous burden of leisure and brought a noteworthy check to the credit of the Minister of Justice. Ernesto V. realised all the boredom that threatened him if the Duchessa left his court, or merely ceased to diffuse joy in it. The evenings began again, and the Prince shewed himself more and more interested in the *commedia dell'arte*. He had the intention of taking a part, but dared not confess this ambition. One day, blushing deeply, he said to the Duchessa: "Why should not I act, also?"

"We are all at Your Highness's orders here; if he deigns to give me the order, I will arrange the plot of a comedy, all the chief scenes in Your Highness's part will be with me, and as, on the first evenings, everyone falters a little, if Your Highness will please to watch me closely, I will tell him the answers that he ought to make." Everything was arranged, and with infinite skill. The very shy Prince was ashamed of being shy, the pains that the Duchessa took not to let this innate shyness suffer made a deep impression on the young Sovereign.

On the day of his first appearance, the performance began half an hour earlier than usual, and there were in the drawing-room, when the party moved into the theatre, only nine or ten elderly women. This audience had but little effect on the Prince, and besides, having been brought up at Munich on sound monarchical principles, they always applauded. Using her authority as Grand Mistress, the Duchessa turned the key in the door by which the common herd of courtiers were admitted to the performance. The Prince, who had a *literary* mind and a fine

figure, came very well out of his opening scenes; he repeated with intelligence the lines which he read in the Duchessa's eyes, or with which she prompted him in an undertone. At a moment when the few spectators were applauding with all their might, the Duchessa gave a signal, the door of honour was thrown open, and the theatre filled in a moment with all the pretty women of the court, who, finding that the Prince cut a charming figure and seemed thoroughly happy, began to applaud; the Prince flushed with joy. He was playing the part of a lover to the Duchessa. So far from having to suggest his speeches to him, she was soon obliged to request him to curtail those speeches; he spoke of love with an enthusiasm which often embarrassed the actress; his replies lasted five minutes. The Duchessa was no longer the dazzling beauty of the year before: Fabrizio's imprisonment, and, far more than that, her stay by Lake Maggiore with a Fabrizio grown morose and silent, had added ten years to the fair Gina's age. Her features had become marked, they shewed more intelligence and less youth.

They had now only very rarely the playfulness of early youth; but on the stage, with the aid of rouge and all the expedients which art supplies to actresses, she was still the prettiest woman at court. The passionate addresses uttered by the Prince put the courtiers on the alert; they were all saying to themselves this evening: "There is the Balbi of this new reign." The Conte felt himself inwardly revolted. The play ended, the Duchessa said to the Prince before all the court:

"Your Highness acts too well; people will say that you are in love with a woman of eight-and-thirty, which will put a stop to my arrangement with the Conte. And so I will not act any more with Your Highness, unless the Prince swears to me to address me as he would a woman

of a certain age, the Signora Marchesa Raversi, for example."

The same play was three times repeated; the Prince was madly happy; but one evening he appeared very thoughtful.

"Either I am greatly mistaken," said the Grand Mistress to the Princess, "or Rassi is seeking to play some trick upon us; I should advise Your Highness to choose a play for to-morrow; the Prince will act badly, and in his despair will tell you something."

The Prince did indeed act very badly; one could barely hear him, and he no longer knew how to end his sentences. At the end of the first act he almost had tears in his eyes; the Duchessa stayed beside him, but was cold and unmoved. The Prince, finding himself alone with her for a moment, in the actors' green-room, went to shut the door.

"I shall never," he said to her, "be able to play in the second and third acts; I absolutely decline to be applauded out of kindness; the applause they gave me this evening cut me to the heart. Give me your advice, what ought I to do?"

"I shall appear on the stage, make a profound reverence to Her Highness, another to the audience, like a real stage manager, and say that, the actor who was playing the part of Lelio having suddenly been taken ill, the performance will conclude with some pieces of music. Conte Rusca and little Ghisolfi will be delighted to be able to shew off their harsh voices to so brilliant an assembly."

The Prince took the Duchessa's hand, which he kissed with rapture.

"Why are you not a man?" he said to her; "you would give me good advice. Rassi has just laid on my desk one hundred and eighty-two depositions against the alleged assassins of my father. Apart from the depositions, there is a formal accusation of more than two hundred pages;

I shall have to read all that, and, besides, I have given my word not to say anything to the Conte. All this is leading straight to executions, already he wants me to fetch back from France, from near Antibes, Ferrante Palla, that great poet whom I admire so much. He is there under the name of Poncet."

"The day on which you have a Liberal hanged, Rassi will be bound to the Ministry by chains of iron, and that is what he wishes more than anything: but Your Highness will no longer be able to speak of leaving the Palace two hours in advance. I shall say nothing either to the Princess or to the Conte of the cry of grief which has just escaped you; but, since I am bound on oath to keep nothing secret from the Princess, I should be glad if Your Highness would say to his mother the same things that he has let fall with me."

This idea provided a diversion to the misery of the hissed actor which was crushing the Sovereign.

"Very well, go and tell my mother; I shall be in her big cabinet."

The Prince left the stage, found his way to the drawing-room from which one entered the theatre, harshly dismissed the Great Chamberlain and the Aide-de-Camp on duty who were following him; the Princess, meanwhile, hurriedly left the play; entering the big cabinet, the Grand Mistress made a profound reverence to mother and son, and left them alone. One may imagine the agitation of the court, these are the things that make it so amusing. At the end of an hour the Prince himself appeared at the door of the Cabinet and summoned the Duchessa; the Princess was in tears; her son's expression had entirely altered.

"These are weak creatures who are out of temper," the Grand Mistress said to herself, "and are seeking some good excuse to be angry with somebody." At first the

mother and son began both to speak at once to tell the details to the Duchessa, who in her answers took great care not to put forward any idea. For two mortal hours, the three actors in this tedious scene did not step out of the parts which we have indicated. The Prince went in person to fetch the two enormous portfolios which Rassi had deposited on his desk; on leaving his mother's cabinet, he found the whole court awaiting him. "Go away, leave me alone!" he cried in a most impolite tone which was quite without precedent in him. The Prince did not wish to be seen carrying the two portfolios himself, a Prince ought not to carry anything. The courtiers vanished in the twinkling of an eye. On his return the Prince encountered no one but the footmen who were blowing out the candles; he dismissed them with fury, also poor Fontana, the Aide-de-Camp on duty, who had been so tactless as to remain, in his zeal.

"Everyone is doing his utmost to try my patience this evening," he said crossly to the Duchessa, as he entered the cabinet; he credited her with great intelligence, and was furious at her evident refusal to offer him any advice. She, for her part, was determined to say nothing so long as she was not asked for her advice *quite expressly*. Another long half hour elapsed before the Prince, who had a sense of his own dignity, could make up his mind to say to her: "But, Signora, you say nothing."

"I am here to serve the Princess, and to forget very quickly what is said before me."

"Very well, Signora," said the Prince, blushing deeply, "I order you to give me your opinion."

"One punishes crimes to prevent their recurrence. Was the late Prince poisoned? That is a very doubtful question. Was he poisoned by the Jacobins? That is what Rassi would dearly like to prove, for then he becomes

for Your Highness a permanently necessary instrument. In that case Your Highness, whose reign is just beginning, can promise himself many evenings like this. Your subjects say on the whole, what is quite true, that Your Highness has a strain of goodness in his nature; so long as he has not had any Liberal hanged, he will enjoy that reputation, and most certainly no one will ever dream of planning to poison him."

"Your conclusion is evident," cried the Princess angrily; "you do not wish us to punish my husband's assassins!"

"Apparently, Ma'am, because I am bound to them by ties of tender affection."

The Duchessa could see in the Prince's eyes that he believed her to be perfectly in accord with his mother as to dictating a plan of action to him. There followed between the two women a fairly rapid succession of bitter repartees, at the end of which the Duchessa protested that she would not utter a single word more, and adhered to her resolution; but the Prince, after a long discussion with his mother, ordered her once more to express her opinion.

"That is what I swear to Your Highnesses that I will not do!"

"But this is really childish!" exclaimed the Prince.

"I beg you to speak, Signora Duchessa," said the Princess with an air of dignity.

"That is what I implore you to excuse me from doing, Ma'am; but Your Highness," the Duchessa went on, addressing the Prince, "reads French perfectly: to calm our agitated minds, would he read *us* a fable by La Fontaine?"

The Princess thought this *"us"* extremely insolent, but assumed an air at once of surprise and of amusement when the Grand Mistress, who had gone with the utmost coolness to open the bookcase, returned with a volume of La Fon-

taine's *Fables;* she turned the pages for some moments, then said to the Prince, handing him the book:

"I beg your Highness to read *the whole* of the fable."

## *THE GARDENER AND THE LORD OF THE MANOR*

A devotee of gardening there was,
Between the peasant and the yeoman class,
Who on the outskirts of a certain village
Owned a neat garden with a bit of tillage.
He made a quickset hedge to fence it in,
And there grew lettuce, pink and jessamine,
Such as win prizes at the local show,
Or make a birthday bouquet for Margot
One day he called upon the neighbouring Squire
To ask his help with a marauding hare.
"The brute," says he, "comes guzzling everywhere,
And simply laughs at all my traps and wire.
No stick or stone will hit him—I declare
He's a magician." "Rubbish! I don't care
If he's the Deuce himself," replied the other,
"I warrant he shan't give you much more bother.
Miraut, in spite of all his cunning,
Won't take much time to get him running."
"But when?" "To-morrow, sure as here I stand."
Next morning he rides up with all his band.
"Now then, we'll lunch! Those chickens don't look bad.

* * * * * * *

The luncheon over, all was preparation,
Bustle and buzz and animation,
Horns blowing, hounds barking, such a hullabaloo,
The good man feared the worst. His fear came true!
The kitchen-garden was a total wreck
Under the trampling, not a speck

For this translation of La Fontaine's fable I am indebted to my friend Mr. Edward Marsh, who allows me to reprint the lines from his *Forty-two Fables of La Fontaine* (William Heinemann, Ltd., 1924). C. K. S. M.

Of pot or frame survived. Good-bye
To onion, leek, and chicory,
Good-bye to marrows and their bravery,
Good-bye to all that makes soup savoury!
* * * * * *

The wretched owner saw no sense
In this grand style of doing things;
But no one marked his mutterings.
The hounds and riders in a single trice
Had wrought more havoc in his paradise
Than all the hares in the vicinity
Could have achieved throughout infinity.

So far the story—now the moral:
Each petty Prince should settle his own quarrel.
If once he gets a King for an ally,
He's certain to regret it by and by.

This reading was followed by a long silence. The Prince paced up and down the cabinet, after going himself to put the volume back in its place.

"Well, Signora," said the Princess, "will you deign to speak?"

"No, indeed, Ma'am, until such time as His Highness shall appoint me his Minister; by speaking here, I should run the risk of losing my place as Grand Mistress."

A fresh silence, lasting a full quarter of an hour; finally the Princess remembered the part that had been played in the past by Marie de' Medici, the mother of Louis XIII: for the last few days the Grand Mistress had made the *lettrice* read aloud the excellent *History of Louis XIII,* by M. Bazin. The Princess, although greatly annoyed, thought that the Duchessa might easily leave the country, and then Rassi, who filled her with mortal terror, might quite well imitate Richelieu and have her banished by her son. At this moment the Princess would have given everything in the world to humiliate her Grand Mistress; but she could not. She rose, and came, with a smile that was slightly

exaggerated, to take the Duchessa's hand and say to her:

"Come, Signora, give me a proof of your friendship by speaking."

"Very well! Two words, and no more: burn, in the grate there, all the papers collected by that viper Rassi, and never reveal to him that they have been burned."

She added in a whisper, and in a familiar tone, in the Princess's ear:

"Rassi may become Richelieu!"

"But, damn it, those papers are costing me more than 80,000 francs!" the Prince exclaimed angrily.

"Prince," replied the Duchessa with emphasis, "that is what it costs to employ scoundrels of low birth. Would to God you could lose a million and never put your trust in the base rascals who kept your father from sleeping during the last six years of his reign."

The words *low birth* had greatly delighted the Princess, who felt that the Conte and his friend had too exclusive a regard for brains, always slightly akin to Jacobinism.

During the short interval of profound silence, filled by the Princess's reflexions, the castle clock struck three. The Princess rose, made a profound reverence to her son, and said to him: "My health does not allow me to prolong the discussion further. Never have a Minister of *low birth;* you will not disabuse me of the idea that your Rassi has stolen half the money he has made you spend on spies." The Princess took two candles from the brackets and put them in the fireplace in such a way that they should not blow out; then, going up to her son, she added: "La Fontaine's fable prevails, in my mind, over the lawful desire to avenge a husband. Will Your Highness permit me to burn *these writings?*" The Prince remained motionless.

"His face is really stupid," the Duchessa said to her-

self; "the Conte is right: the late Prince would not have kept us out of our beds until three o'clock in the morning, before making up his mind."

The Princess, still standing, went on:

"That little attorney would be very proud, if he knew that his papers stuffed with lies, and arranged so as to secure his own advancement, had occupied the two greatest personages in the State for a whole night."

The Prince dashed at one of the portfolios like a madman, and emptied its contents into the fireplace. The mass of papers nearly extinguished the two candles; the room filled with smoke. The Princess saw in her son's eyes that he was tempted to seize a jug of water and save these papers, which were costing him eighty thousand francs.

"Open the window!" she cried angrily to the Duchessa. The Duchessa made haste to obey; at once all the papers took light together; there was a great roar in the chimney, and it soon became evident that it was on fire.

The Prince had a petty nature in all matters of money; he thought he saw his Palace in flames, and all the treasures that it contained destroyed; he ran to the window and called the guard in a voice completely altered. The soldiers in a tumult rushed into the courtyard at the sound of the Prince's voice, he returned to the fireplace which was sucking in the air from the open window with a really alarming sound; he grew impatient, swore, took two or three turns up and down the room like a man out of his mind, and finally ran out.

The Princess and the Grand Mistress remained standing, face to face, and preserving a profound silence.

"Is the storm going to begin again?" the Duchessa asked herself; "upon my word, my cause is won." And she was preparing to be highly impertinent in her replies, when a sudden thought came to her; she saw the second portfolio

intact. "No, my cause is only half won!" She said to the Princess, in a distinctly cold tone:

"Does Ma'am order me to burn the rest of these papers?"

"And where will you burn them?" asked the Princess angrily.

"In the drawing-room fire; if I throw them in one after another, there is no danger."

The Duchessa put under her arm the portfolio bursting with papers, took a candle and went into the next room. She looked first to see that the portfolio was that which contained the depositions, put in her shawl five or six bundles of papers, burned the rest with great care, then disappeared without taking leave of the Princess.

"There is a fine piece of impertinence," she said to herself, with a laugh, "but her affectations of inconsolable widowhood came very near to making me lose my head on a scaffold."

On hearing the sound of the Duchessa's carriage, the Princess was beside herself with rage at her Grand Mistress.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, the Duchessa sent for the Conte; he was at the fire at the Castle, but soon appeared with the news that it was all over. "That little Prince has really shewn great courage, and I have complimented him on it effusively."

"Examine these depositions quickly, and let us burn them as soon as possible."

The Conte read them, and turned pale.

"Upon my soul, they have come very near the truth; their procedure has been very cleverly managed, they are positively on the track of Ferrante Palla; and, if he speaks, we have a difficult part to play."

"But he will not speak," cried the Duchessa; "he is a man of honour: burn them, burn them."

"Not yet. Allow me to take down the names of a dozen

or fifteen dangerous witnesses, whom I shall take the liberty of removing, if Rassi ever thinks of beginning again."

"I may remind Your Excellency that the Prince has given his word to say nothing to his Minister of Justice of our midnight escapade."

"From cowardice and fear of a scene he will keep it."

"Now, my friend, this is a night that has greatly hastened our marriage; I should not have wished to bring you as my portion a criminal trial, still less for a sin which I was led to commit by my interest in another man."

The Conte was in love; he took her hand with an exclamation; tears stood in his eyes.

"Before you go, give me some advice as to the way I ought to behave with the Princess; I am utterly worn out, I have been play-acting for an hour on the stage and for five in her cabinet."

"You have avenged yourself quite sufficiently for the Princess's sour speeches, which were due only to weakness, by the impertinence with which you left her. Address her to-morrow in the tone you used this morning; Rassi is not yet in prison or in exile, and we have not yet torn up Fabrizio's sentence.

"You were asking the Princess to come to a decision, which is a thing that always annoys Princes and even Prime Ministers; also you are her Grand Mistress, that is to say her little servant. By a reversion which is inevitable in weak people, in three days Rassi will be more in favour than ever; he will try to have someone hanged: so long as he has not compromised the Prince, he is sure of nothing.

"There has been a man injured in to-night's fire; he is a tailor, who, upon my word, shewed an extraordinary intrepidity. To-morrow I am going to ask the Prince to take my arm and come with me to pay the tailor a visit; I shall be armed to the teeth and shall keep a sharp

look-out; but anyhow, this young Prince is not hated at all as yet. I wish to make him accustomed to walking in the streets, it is a trick I am playing on Rassi, who is certainly going to succeed me, and will not be able to allow such imprudences. On our way back from the tailor's, I shall take the Prince past his father's statue; he will notice the marks of the stones which have broken the Roman toga in which the idiot of a sculptor dressed it up; and, in short, he will have to be a great fool if he does not on his own initiative make the comment: 'This is what one gains by having Jacobins hanged.' To which I shall reply: 'You must hang either ten thousand or none at all: the Saint-Bartholomew destroyed the Protestants in France.'

"To-morrow, dear friend, before this excursion, send your name in to the Prince, and say to him: 'Yesterday evening, I performed the duties of a Minister to you, and, by your orders, have incurred the Princess's displeasure. You will have to pay me.' He will expect a demand for money, and will knit his brows; you will leave him plunged in this unhappy thought for as long as you can; then you will say: 'I beg Your Highness to order that Fabrizio be tried *in contradittorio*' (which means, in his presence) 'by the twelve most respected judges in your States.' And, without losing any time, you will present for his signature a little order written out by your own fair hand, which I am going to dictate to you; I shall of course include the clause that the former sentence is quashed. To this there is only one objection; but, if you press the matter warmly, it will not occur to the Prince's mind. He may say to you: 'Fabrizio must first make himself a prisoner in the citadel.' To which you will reply: 'He will make himself a prisoner in the town prison' (you know that I am the master there; every evening your nephew will come to see us). If the Prince answers: 'No, his escape has tarnished the honour

of my citadel, and I desire, for form's sake, that he return to the cell in which he was'; you in turn will reply: 'No, for there he would be at the disposal of my enemy Rassi;' and, in one of those feminine sentences which you utter so effectively, you will give him to understand that, to make Rassi yield, you have only to tell him of to-night's *auto-da-fè;* if he insists, you will announce that you are going to spend a fortnight at your place at Sacca.

"You will send for Fabrizio, and consult him as to this step which may land him in prison. If, to anticipate everything while he is under lock and key, Rassi should grow too impatient and have me poisoned, Fabrizio may run a certain risk. But that is hardly probable; you know that I have imported a French cook, who is the merriest of men, and makes puns; well, punning is incompatible with poison. I have already told our friend Fabrizio that I have managed to find all the witnesses of his fine and courageous action; it was evidently that fellow Giletti who tried to murder him. I have not spoken to you of these witnesses, because I wished to give you a surprise, but the plan has failed; the Prince refused to sign. I have told our friend Fabrizio that certainly I should procure him a high ecclesiastical dignity; but I shall have great difficulty if his enemies can raise the objection in the Roman Curia of a charge of murder.

"Do you realise, Signora, that, if he is not tried and judged in the most solemn fashion, all his life long the name of Giletti will be a reproach to him? It would be a great act of cowardice not to have oneself tried, when one is sure of one's innocence. Besides, even if he were guilty, I should make them acquit him. When I spoke to him, the fiery youngster would not allow me to finish, he picked up the official almanac, and we went through it together choosing the twelve most upright and learned judges; when we had made the list, we cancelled six names

for which we substituted those of six counsel, my personal enemies, and, as we could find only two enemies, we filled up the gaps with four rascals who are devoted to Rassi."

This proposal filled the Duchessa with a mortal anxiety, and not without cause; at length she yielded to reason, and, at the Minister's dictation, wrote out the order appointing the judges.

The Conte did not leave her until six o'clock in the morning; she endeavoured to sleep, but in vain. At nine o'clock, she took breakfast with Fabrizio, whom she found burning with a desire to be tried; at ten, she waited on the Princess, who was not visible; at eleven, she saw the Prince, who was holding his levee, and signed the order without the slightest objection. The Duchessa sent the order to the Conte, and retired to bed.

It would be pleasant perhaps to relate Rassi's fury when the Conte obliged him to countersign, in the Prince's presence, the order signed that morning by the Prince himself; but we must go on with our story.

The Conte discussed the merits of each judge, and offered to change the names. But the reader is perhaps a little tired of all these details of procedure, no less than of all these court intrigues. From the whole business one can derive this moral, that the man who mingles with a court compromises his happiness, if he is happy, and, in any event, makes his future depend on the intrigues of a chambermaid.

On the other hand in America, in the Republic, one has to spend the whole weary day paying serious court to the shopkeepers in the street, and must become as stupid as they are; and there, one has no Opera.

The Duchessa, when she rose in the evening, had a moment of keen anxiety: Fabrizio was not to be found; finally, towards midnight, during the performance at court,

she received a letter from him. Instead of making himself a prisoner *in the town prison,* where the Conte was in control, he had gone back to occupy his old cell in the citadel, only too happy to be living within a few feet of Clelia.

This was an event of vast consequence: in this place he was exposed to the risk of poison more than ever. This act of folly filled the Duchessa with despair; she forgave the cause of it, a mad love for Clelia, because unquestionably in a few days' time that young lady was going to marry the rich Marchese Crescenzi. This folly restored to Fabrizio all the influence he had originally enjoyed over the Duchessa's heart.

"It is that cursed paper which I went and made the Prince sign that will be his death! What fools men are with their ideas of honour! As if one needed to think of honour under absolute governments, in countries where a Rassi is Minister of Justice! He ought to have accepted the pardon outright, which the Prince would have signed just as readily as the order convening this extraordinary tribunal. What does it matter, after all, that a man of Fabrizio's birth should be more or less accused of having himself, sword in hand, killed an actor like Giletti?"

No sooner had she received Fabrizio's note than the Duchessa ran to the Conte, whom she found deadly pale.

"Great God! Dear friend, I am most unlucky in handling that boy, and you will be vexed with me again. I can prove to you that I made the gaoler of the town prison come here yesterday evening; every day your nephew would have come to take tea with you. What is so terrible is that it is impossible for you and me to say to the Prince that there is fear of poison, and of poison administered by Rassi; the suspicion would seem to him the height of immorality. However, if you insist, I am ready to go up to the Palace; but I am certain of the

answer. I am going to say more; I offer you a stratagem which I would not employ for myself. Since I have been in power in this country, I have not caused the death of a single man, and you know that I am so sensitive in that respect that sometimes, at the close of day, I still think of those two spies whom I had shot, rather too light-heartedly, in Spain. Very well, do you wish me to get rid of Rassi? The danger in which he is placing Fabrizio is unbounded; he has there a sure way of sending me packing."

This proposal pleased the Duchessa extremely, but she did not adopt it.

"I do not wish," she said to the Conte, "that in our retirement, beneath the beautiful sky of Naples, you should have dark thoughts in the evenings."

"But, dear friend, it seems to me that we have only the choice between one dark thought and another. What will you do, what will I do myself, if Fabrizio is carried off by an illness?"

The discussion returned to dwell upon this idea, and the Duchessa ended it with this speech:

"Rassi owes his life to the fact that I love you more than Fabrizio; no, I do not wish to poison all the evenings of the old age which we are going to spend together."

The Duchessa hastened to the fortress; General Fabio Conti was delighted at having to stop her with the strict letter of the military regulations: no one might enter a state prison without an order signed by the Prince.

"But the Marchese Crescenzi and his musicians come every day to the citadel?"

"Because I obtained an order for them from the Prince."

The poor Duchessa did not know the full tale of her troubles. General Fabio Conti had regarded himself as personally dishonoured by Fabrizio's escape: when he saw him arrive at the citadel, he ought not to have admitted

him, for he had no order to that effect. "But," he said to himself, "it is Heaven that is sending him to me to restore my honour, and to save me from the ridicule which would assail my military career. This opportunity must not be missed: doubtless they are going to acquit him, and I have only a few days for my revenge."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE arrival of our hero threw Clelia into despair: the poor girl, pious and sincere with herself, could not avoid the reflexion that there would never be any happiness for her apart from Fabrizio; but she had made a vow to the Madonna, at the time when her father was nearly poisoned, that she would offer him the sacrifice of marrying the Marchese Crescenzi. She had made the vow that she would never see Fabrizio, and already she was a prey to the most fearful remorse over the admission she had been led to make in the letter she had written Fabrizio on the eve of his escape. How is one to depict what occurred in that sorrowful heart when, occupied in a melancholy way with watching her birds flit to and fro, and raising her eyes from habit, and with affection, towards the window from which formerly Fabrizio used to look at her, she saw him there once again, greeting her with tender respect.

She imagined it to be a vision which Heaven had allowed for her punishment; then the atrocious reality became apparent to her reason. "They have caught him again," she said to herself, "and he is lost!" She remembered the things that had been said in the fortress after the escape; the humblest of the gaolers regarded themselves as mortally insulted. Clelia looked at Fabrizio, and in spite of herself that look portrayed in full the passion that had thrown her into despair.

"Do you suppose," she seemed to be saying to Fabrizio, "that I shall find happiness in that sumptuous palace

which they are making ready for me? My father repeats to me till I am weary that you are as poor as ourselves; but, great God, with what joy would I share that poverty! But, alas, we must never see one another again!"

Clelia had not the strength to make use of the alphabets: as she looked at Fabrizio she felt faint and sank upon a chair that stood beside the window. Her head rested upon the ledge of this window, and as she had been anxious to see him until the last moment, her face was turned towards Fabrizio, who had a perfect view of it. When, after a few moments, she opened her eyes again, her first glance was at Fabrizio: she saw tears in his eyes, but those tears were the effect of extreme happiness; he saw that absence had by no means made him forgotten. The two poor young things remained for some time as though spell-bound by the sight of each other. Fabrizio ventured to sing, as if he were accompanying himself on the guitar, a few improvised lines which said: *"It is to see you again* that I have returned to prison; *they are going to try me."*

These words seemed to awaken all Clelia's dormant virtue: she rose swiftly, and hid her eyes; and, by the most vivid gestures, sought to express to him that she must never see him again; she had promised this to the Madonna, and had looked at him just now in a moment of forgetfulness. Fabrizio venturing once more to express his love, Clelia fled from the room indignant, and swearing to herself that never would she see him again, for such were the precise words of her vow to the Madonna: *"My eyes shall never see him again."* She had written them on a little slip of paper which her uncle Don Cesare had allowed her to burn upon the altar at the moment of the oblation, while he was saying mass.

But, oaths or no oaths, Fabrizio's presence in the Torre Farnese had restored to Clelia all her old habits

and activities. Normally she passed all her days in solitude, in her room. No sooner had she recovered from the unforeseen disturbance in which the sight of Fabrizio had plunged her, than she began to wander through the *palazzo,* and, so to speak, to renew her acquaintance with all her humble friends. A very loquacious old woman, employed in the kitchen, said to her with an air of mystery: "This time, Signor Fabrizio will not leave the citadel."

"He will not make the mistake of going over the walls again," said Clelia, "but he will leave by the door if he is acquitted."

"I say, and I can assure Your Excellency that he will go out of the citadel feet first."

Clelia turned extremely pale, a change which was remarked by the old woman and stopped the flow of her eloquence. She said to herself that she had been guilty of an imprudence in speaking thus before the governor's daughter, whose duty it would be to tell everybody that Fabrizio had died a natural death. As she went up to her room, Clelia met the prison doctor, an honest sort of man but timid, who told her with a terrified air that Fabrizio was seriously ill. Clelia could hardly keep on her feet; she sought everywhere for her uncle, the good Don Cesare, and at length found him in the chapel, where he was praying fervently: from his face he appeared upset. The dinner bell rang. At table, not a word was exchanged between the brothers; only, towards the end of the meal, the General addressed a few very harsh words to his brother. The latter looked at the servants, who left the room.

"General," said Don Cesare to the governor, "I have the honour to inform you that I am leaving the citadel: I give you my resignation."

"*Bravo! Bravissimo!* So that I shall be suspect! . . . And your reason, if you please?"

"My conscience."

"Go on, you're only a frock! You know nothing about honour."

"Fabrizio is dead," thought Clelia; "they have poisoned him at dinner, or it is arranged for to-morrow." She ran to the aviary, resolved to sing, accompanying herself on the piano. "I shall go to confession," she said to herself, "and I shall be forgiven for having broken my vow to save a man's life." What was her consternation when, on reaching the aviary, she saw that the screens had been replaced by planks fastened to the iron bars. In desperation she tried to give the prisoner a warning in a few words shouted rather than sung. There was no response of any sort: a deathly silence already reigned in the Torre Farnese. "It is all over," she said to herself. Beside herself, she went downstairs, then returned to equip herself with the little money she had and some small diamond earrings; she took also, on her way out, the bread that remained from dinner, which had been placed in a sideboard. "If he still lives, my duty is to save him." She advanced with a haughty air to the little door of the tower; this door stood open, and eight soldiers had just been posted in the pillared room on the ground floor. She faced these soldiers boldly; Clelia counted on speaking to the serjeant who would be in charge of them: this man was absent. Clelia rushed on to the little iron staircase which wound in a spiral round one of the pillars; the soldiers looked at her with great stupefaction but, evidently on account of her lace shawl and her hat, dared not say anything to her. On the first landing there was no one; but, when she reached the second, at the entrance to the corridor which, as the reader may remember, was closed by three barred gates and

led to Fabrizio's cell, she found a turnkey who was a stranger to her, and said to her with a terrified air:

"He has not dined yet."

"I know that," said Clelia haughtily. The man dared not stop her. Twenty paces farther, Clelia found sitting upon the first of the six wooden steps which led to Fabrizio's cell, another turnkey, elderly and very cross, who said to her firmly:

"Signorina, have you an order from the governor?"

"Do you mean to say that you do not know me?"

Clelia, at that moment, was animated by a supernatural force, she was beside herself. "I am going to save my husband," she said to herself.

While the old turnkey was exclaiming: "But my duty does not allow me. . . ." Clelia hastened up the six steps; she hurled herself against the door: an enormous key was in the lock; she required all her strength to make it turn. At that moment, the old turnkey, who was half intoxicated, seized the hem of her gown, she went quickly into the room, shut the door behind her, tearing her gown, and, as the turnkey was pushing the door to follow her, closed it with a bolt which lay to her hand. She looked into the cell and saw Fabrizio seated at a small table upon which his dinner was laid. She dashed at the table, overturned it, and, seizing Fabrizio by the arm, said to him:

*"Hai mangiato?"*

This use of the singular form delighted Fabrizio. In her confusion, Clelia forgot for the first time her feminine reserve, and let her love appear.

Fabrizio had been going to begin the fatal meal; he took her in his arms and covered her with kisses. "This dinner was poisoned," was his thought: "if I tell her that I have not touched it, religion regains its hold, and Clelia flies. If, on the other hand, she regards me as a

dying man, I shall obtain from her a promise not to leave me. She wishes to find some way of breaking off her abominable marriage and here chance offers us one: the gaolers will collect, they will break down the door, and then there will be such a scandal that perhaps the Marchese Crescenzi will fight shy, and the marriage be broken off."

During the moment of silence occupied by these reflexions Fabrizio felt that already Clelia was seeking to free herself from his embrace.

"I feel no pain as yet," he said to her, "but presently it will prostrate me at your feet; help me to die."

"O my only friend!" was her answer, "I will die with thee." She clasped him in her arms with a convulsive movement.

She was so beautiful, half unclad and in this state of intense passion, that Fabrizio could not resist an almost unconscious impulse. No resistance was offered him.

In the enthusiasm of passion and generous instincts which follows an extreme happiness, he said to her fatuously:

"I must not allow an unworthy falsehood to soil the first moments of our happiness: but for your courage, I should now be only a corpse, or writhing in atrocious pain, but I was going to begin my dinner when you came in, and I have not touched these dishes at all."

Fabrizio dwelt upon these appalling images to conjure away the indignation which he could already read in Clelia's eyes. She looked at him for some moments, while two violent and conflicting sentiments fought within her, then flung herself into his arms. They heard a great noise in the corridor, the three iron doors were violently opened and shut, voices shouted.

"Ah! If I had arms!" cried Fabrizio; "they made me give them up before they would let me in. No doubt

they are coming to kill me. Farewell, my Clelia, I bless my death since it has been the cause of my happiness." Clelia embraced him and gave him a little dagger with an ivory handle, the blade of which was scarcely longer than that of a pen-knife.

"Do not let yourself be killed," she said to him, "and defend yourself to the last moment; if my uncle the Priore hears the noise, he is a man of courage and virtue, he will save you." So saying she rushed to the door.

"If you are not killed," she said with exaltation, holding the bolt of the door in her hand and turning her head towards him, "let yourself die of hunger rather than touch anything. Carry this bread always on you." The noise came nearer, Fabrizio seized her round the body, stepped into her place by the door, and, opening it with fury, dashed down the six steps of the wooden staircase. He had in his hand the little dagger with the ivory handle, and was on the point of piercing with it the waistcoat of General Fontana, Aide-de-Camp to the Prince, who recoiled with great alacrity, crying in a panic: "But I am coming to save you, Signor del Dongo."

Fabrizio went up the six steps, called into the cell: "Fontana has come to save me"; then, returning to the General, on the wooden steps, discussed matters coldly with him. He begged him at great length to pardon him a movement of anger. "They wished to poison me; the dinner that is there on my table is poisoned; I had the sense not to touch it, but I may admit to you that this procedure has given me a shock. When I heard you on the stair, I thought that they were coming to finish me off with their dirks. Signor Generale, I request you to order that no one shall enter my cell: they would remove the poison, and our good Prince must know all."

The General, very pale and completely taken aback,

passed on the orders suggested by Fabrizio to the picked body of gaolers who were following him: these men, greatly dismayed at finding the poison discovered, hastened downstairs; they went first, ostensibly so as not to delay the Prince's Aide-de-Camp on the narrow staircase, actually in order to escape themselves and vanish. To the great surprise of General Fontana, Fabrizio kept him for fully a quarter of an hour on the little iron staircase which ran round the pillar of the ground floor; he wished to give Clelia time to hide on the floor above.

It was the Duchessa who, after various wild attempts, had managed to get General Fontana sent to the citadel; it was only by chance that she succeeded. On leaving Conte Mosca, as alarmed as she was herself, she had hastened to the Palace. The Princess, who had a marked repugnance for energy, which seemed to her vulgar, thought her mad and did not appear at all disposed to attempt any unusual measures on her behalf. The Duchessa, out of her senses, was weeping hot tears, she could do nothing but repeat, every moment:

"But, Ma'am, in a quarter of an hour Fabrizio will be dead, poisoned."

Seeing the Princess remain perfectly composed, the Duchessa became mad with grief. She completely overlooked the moral reflexion which would not have escaped a woman brought up in one of those Northern religions which allow self-examination: "I was the first to use poison, and I am perishing by poison." In Italy reflexions of that sort, in moments of passion, appear in the poorest of taste, as a pun would seem in Paris in similar circumstances.

The Duchessa, in desperation, risked going into the drawing-room where she found the Marchese Crescenzi, who was in waiting that day. On her return to Parma he had thanked her effusively for the place of *Cavaliere*

*d'onore,* to which, but for her, he would never have had any claim. Protestations of unbounded devotion had not been lacking on his part. The Duchessa appealed to him in these words:

"Rassi is going to have Fabrizio, who is in the citadel, poisoned. Take in your pocket some chocolate and a bottle of water which I shall give you. Go up to the citadel, and save my life by saying to General Fabio Conti that you will break off your marriage with his daughter if he does not allow you to give the water and the chocolate to Fabrizio with your own hands."

The Marchese turned pale, and his features, so far from shewing any animation at these words, presented a picture of the dullest embarrassment; he could not believe in the possibility of so shocking a crime in a town as moral as Parma, and one over which so great a Prince reigned, and so forth; these platitudes, moreover, he uttered slowly. In a word, the Duchessa found an honest man, but the weakest imaginable, and one who could not make up his mind to act. After a score of similar phrases interrupted by cries of impatience from Signora Sanseverina, he hit upon an excellent idea: the oath which he had given as *Cavaliere d'onore* forbade him to take part in any action against the Government.

Who can conceive the anxiety and despair of the Duchessa, who felt that time was flying?

"But, at least, see the governor; tell him that I shall pursue Fabrizio's murderers to hell itself!"

Despair increased the Duchessa's natural eloquence, but all this fire only made the Marchese more alarmed and doubled his irresolution; at the end of an hour he was less disposed to act than at the first moment.

This unhappy woman, who had reached the utmost limits of despair and knew well that the governor would refuse nothing to so rich a son-in-law, went so far as to

fling herself at his feet; at this the Marchese's pusillanimity seemed to increase still further; he himself, at the sight of this strange spectacle, was afraid of being compromised unawares; but a singular thing happened: the Marchese, a good man at heart, was touched by the tears and by the posture, at his feet, of so beautiful and, above all, so influential a woman.

"I myself, noble and rich as I am," he said to himself, "will perhaps one day be at the feet of some Republican!" The Marchese burst into tears, and finally it was agreed that the Duchessa, in her capacity as Grand Mistress, should present him to the Princess, who would give him permission to convey to Fabrizio a little hamper, of the contents of which he would declare himself to know nothing.

The previous evening, before the Duchessa knew of Fabrizio's act of folly in going to the citadel, they had played at court a *commedia dell'arte,* and the Prince, who always reserved for himself the lover's part to be played with the Duchessa, had been so passionate in speaking to her of his affection that he would have been absurd, if, in Italy, an impassioned man or a Prince could ever be thought so.

The Prince, extremely shy, but always intensely serious in matters of love, met, in one of the corridors of the Castle, the Duchessa who was carrying off the Marchese Crescenzi, in great distress, to the Princess. He was so surprised and dazzled by the beauty, full of emotion, which her despair gave the Grand Mistress, that for the first time in his life he shewed character. With a more than imperious gesture he dismissed the Marchese, and began to make a declaration of love, according to all the rules, to the Duchessa. The Prince had doubtless prepared this speech long beforehand, for there were things in it that were quite reasonable,

"Since the conventions of my rank forbid me to give myself the supreme happiness of marrying you, I will swear to you upon the Blessed Sacrament never to marry without your permission in writing. I am well aware," he added, "that I am making you forfeit the hand of a Prime Minister, a clever and extremely amiable man; but after all he is fifty-six, and I am not yet two-and-twenty. I should consider myself to be insulting you, and to deserve your refusal if I spoke to you of the advantages that there are apart from love; but everyone who takes an interest in money at my court speaks with admiration of the proof of his love which the Conte gives you, in leaving you the custodian of all that he possesses. I shall be only too happy to copy him in that respect. You will make a better use of my fortune than I, and you shall have the entire disposal of the annual sum which my Ministers hand over to the Intendant General of my Crown; so that it will be you, Signora Duchessa, who will decide upon the sums which I may spend each month." The Duchessa found all these details very long; Fabrizio's dangers pierced her heart.

"Then you do not know, Prince," she cried, "that at this moment they are poisoning Fabrizio in your citadel! Save him! I accept everything."

The arrangement of this speech was perfect in its clumsiness. At the mere mention of poison all the ease, all the good faith which this poor, moral Prince was putting into the conversation vanished in the twinkling of an eye; the Duchessa did not notice her tactlessness until it was too late to remedy it, and her despair was intensified, a thing she had believed to be impossible. "If I had not spoken of poison," she said to herself, "he would grant me Fabrizio's freedom. . . . O my dear Fabrizio," she added, "so it is fated that it is I who must pierce your heart by my foolishness!"

It took the Duchessa all her time and all her coquetry to get the Prince back to his talk of passionate love; but even then he remained deeply offended. It was his mind alone that spoke; his heart had been frozen by the idea first of all of poison, and then by the other idea, as displeasing as the first was terrible: "They administer poison in my States, and without telling me! So Rassi wishes to dishonour me in the eyes of Europe! And God knows what I shall read next month in the Paris newspapers!"

Suddenly the heart of this shy young man was silent, his mind arrived at an idea.

"Dear Duchessa! You know whether I am attached to you. Your terrible ideas about poison are unfounded, I prefer to think; still, they give me food for thought, they make me almost forget for an instant the passion that I feel for you, which is the only passion that I have ever felt in all my life. I know that I am not attractive; I am only a boy, hopelessly in love; still, put me to the test."

The Prince grew quite animated in using this language.

"Save Fabrizio, and I accept everything! No doubt I am carried away by the foolish fears of a mother's heart; but send this moment to fetch Fabrizio from the citadel, that I may see him. If he is still alive, send him from the Palace to the town prison, where he can remain for months on end, if Your Highness requires, until his trial."

The Duchessa saw with despair that the Prince, instead of granting with a word so simple a request, had turned sombre; he was very red, he looked at the Duchessa, then lowered his eyes, and his cheeks grew pale. The idea of poison put forward at the wrong moment, had suggested to him an idea worthy of his father or of Philip II; but he dared not express it in words.

"Listen, Signora," he said at length, as though forcing himself to speak, and in a tone that was by no means gracious, "you look down on me as a child and, what is more, a creature without graces: very well, I am going to say something which is horrible, but which has just been suggested to me by the deep and true passion that I feel for you. If I believed for one moment in this poison, I should have taken action already, as in duty bound; but I see in your request only a passionate fancy, and one of which, I beg leave to state, I do not see all the consequences. You desire that I should act without consulting my Ministers, I who have been reigning for barely three months! You ask of me a great exception to my ordinary mode of action, which I regard as highly reasonable. It is you, Signora, who are here and now the Absolute Sovereign, you give me reason to hope in a matter which is everything to me; but, in an hour's time, when this imaginary poison, when this nightmare has vanished, my presence will become an annoyance to you, I shall forfeit your favour, Signora. Very well, I require an oath: swear to me, Signora, that if Fabrizio is restored to you safe and sound I shall obtain from you, in three months from now, all that my love can desire; you will assure the happiness of my entire life by placing at my disposal an hour of your own, and you will be wholly mine."

At that moment, the Castle clock struck two. "Ah! It is too late, perhaps," thought the Duchessa.

"I swear it," she cried, with a wild look in her eyes.

At once the Prince became another man; he ran to the far end of the gallery, where the Aide-de-Camp's room was.

"General Fontana, dash off to the citadel this instant, go up as quickly as possible to the room in which they have put Signor del Dongo, and bring him to me; I must

speak to him within twenty minutes, fifteen if possible."

"Ah, General," cried the Duchessa, who had followed the Prince, "one minute may decide my life. A report which is doubtless false makes me fear poison for Fabrizio: shout to him, as soon as you are within earshot, not to eat. If he has touched his dinner, make him swallow an emetic, tell him that it is I who wish it, employ force if necessary; tell him that I am following close behind you, and I shall be obliged to you all my life."

"Signora Duchessa, my horse is saddled, I am generally considered a pretty good horseman, and I shall ride hell for leather; I shall be at the citadel eight minutes before you."

"And I, Signora Duchessa," cried the Prince, "I ask of you four of those eight minutes."

The Aide-de-Camp had vanished, he was a man who had no other merit than that of his horsemanship. No sooner had he shut the door than the young Prince, who seemed to have acquired some character, seized the Duchessa's hand.

"Condescend, Signora," he said to her with passion, "to come with me to the chapel." The Duchessa, at a loss for the first time in her life, followed him without uttering a word. The Prince and she passed rapidly down the whole length of the great gallery of the Palace, the chapel being at the other end. On entering the chapel, the Prince fell on his knees, almost as much before the Duchessa as before the altar.

"Repeat the oath," he said with passion: "if you had been fair, if the wretched fact of my being a Prince had not been against me, you would have granted me out of pity for my love what you now owe me because you have sworn it."

"If I see Fabrizio again not poisoned, if he is alive

in a week from now, if His Highness will appoint him Coadjutor with eventual succession to Archbishop Landriani, my honour, my womanly dignity, everything shall he trampled under foot, and I will give myself to His Highness."

"But, *dear friend,*" said the Prince with a blend of timid anxiety and affection which was quite pleasing, "I am afraid of some ambush which I do not understand, and which might destroy my happiness; that would kill me. If the Archbishop opposes me with one of those ecclesiastical reasons which keep things dragging on for year after year, what will become of me? You see that I am behaving towards you with entire good faith; are you going to be a little Jesuit with me?"

"No: in good faith, if Fabrizio is saved, if, so far as lies in your power, you make him Coadjutor and a future Archbishop, I dishonour myself and I am yours.

"Your Highness undertakes to write *approved* on the margin of a request which His Grace the Archbishop will present to you in a week from now."

"I will sign you a blank sheet; reign over me and over my States," cried the Prince, colouring with happiness and really beside himself. He demanded a second oath. He was so deeply moved that he forgot the shyness that came so naturally to him, and, in this Palace chapel in which they were alone, murmured in an undertone to the Duchessa things which, uttered three days earlier, would have altered the opinion that she held of him. But in her the despair which Fabrizio's danger had caused her had given place to horror at the promise which had been wrung from her.

The Duchessa was completely upset by what she had just done. If she did not yet feel all the fearful bitterness of the word she had given, it was because her

attention was occupied in wondering whether General Fontana would be able to reach the citadel in time.

To free herself from the madly amorous speeches of this boy, and to change the topic of conversation, she praised a famous picture by the Parmigianino, which hung over the high altar of the chapel.

"Be so good as to permit me to send it to you," said the Prince.

"I accept," replied the Duchessa; "but allow me to go and meet Fabrizio."

With a distracted air she told her coachman to put his horses into a gallop. On the bridge over the moat of the citadel she met General Fontana and Fabrizio, who were coming out on foot.

"Have you eaten?"

"No, by a miracle."

The Duchessa flung her arms round Fabrizio's neck and fell in a faint which lasted for an hour, and gave fears first for her life and afterwards for her reason.

The governor Fabio Conti had turned white with rage at the sight of General Fontana: he had been so slow in obeying the Prince's orders that the Aide-de-Camp, who supposed that the Duchessa was going to occupy the position of reigning mistress, had ended by losing his temper. The governor reckoned upon making Fabrizio's illness last for two or three days, and "now," he said to himself, "the General, a man from the court, will find that insolent fellow writhing in the agony which is my revenge for his escape."

Fabio Conti, lost in thought, stopped in the guard-room on the ground floor of the Torre Farnese, from which he hastily dismissed the soldiers: he did not wish to have any witnesses of the scene which was about to be played. Five minutes later he was petrified with astonishment on hearing Fabrizio's voice, on seeing him, alive

and alert, giving General Fontana an account of his imprisonment. He vanished.

Fabrizio shewed himself a perfect "gentleman" in his interview with the Prince. For one thing, he did not wish to assume the air of a boy who takes fright at nothing. The Prince asked him kindly how he felt: "Like a man, Serene Highness, who is dying of hunger, having fortunately neither broken my fast nor dined." After having had the honour to thank the Prince, he requested permission to visit the Archbishop before surrendering himself at the town prison. The Prince had turned prodigiously pale, when his boyish head had been penetrated by the idea that this poison was not altogether a chimæra of the Duchessa's imagination. Absorbed in this cruel thought, he did not at first reply to the request to see the Archbishop which Fabrizio addressed to him; then he felt himself obliged to atone for his distraction by a profusion of graciousness.

"Go out alone, Signore, walk through the streets of my capital unguarded. About ten or eleven o'clock you will return to prison, where I hope that you will not long remain."

On the morrow of this great day, the most remarkable of his life, the Prince fancied himself a little Napoleon; he had read that that great man had been kindly treated by several of the beauties of his court. Once established as a Napoleon in love, he remembered that he had been one also under fire. His heart was still quite enraptured by the firmness of his conduct with the Duchessa. The consciousness of having done something difficult made him another man altogether for a fortnight; he became susceptible to generous considerations; he had some character.

He began this day by burning the patent of Conte made out in favour of Rassi, which had been lying on his desk for a month. He degraded General Fabio Conti, and

called upon Colonel Lange, his successor, for the truth as to the poison. Lange, a gallant Polish officer, intimidated the gaolers, and reported that there had been a design to poison Signor del Dongo's breakfast; but too many people would have had to be taken into confidence. Arrangements to deal with his dinner were more successful; and, but for the arrival of General Fontana, Signor del Dongo was a dead man. The Prince was dismayed; but, as he was really in love, it was a consolation for him to be able to say to himself: "It appears that I really did save Signor del Dongo's life, and the Duchessa will never dare fail to keep the word she has given me." Another idea struck him: "My business is a great deal more difficult than I thought; everyone is agreed that the Duchessa is a woman of infinite cleverness, here my policy and my heart go together. It would be divine for me if she would consent to be my Prime Minister."

That evening, the Prince was so infuriated by the horrors that he had discovered that he would not take part in the play.

"I should be more than happy," he said to the Duchessa, "if you would reign over my States as you reign over my heart. To begin with, I am going to tell you how I have spent my day." He then told her everything, very exactly: the burning of Conte Rassi's patent, the appointment of Lange, his report on the poisoning, and so forth. "I find that I have very little experience for ruling. The Conte humiliates me by his jokes. He makes jokes even at the Council; and, in society, he says things the truth of which you are going to disprove; he says that I am a boy whom he leads wherever he chooses. Though one is a Prince, Signora, one is none the less a man, and these things annoy one. In order to give an air of improbability to the stories which Signor Mosca may repeat, they have made me summon to the Ministry that

dangerous scoundrel Rassi, and now there is that General Conti who believes him to be still so powerful that he dare not admit that it was he or the Raversi who ordered him to destroy your nephew; I have a good mind simply to send General Fabio Conti before the court; the judges will see whether he is guilty of attempted poisoning."

"But, Prince, have you judges?"

"What!" said the Prince in astonishment.

"You have certain learned counsel who walk the streets with a solemn air; apart from that they always give the judgment that will please the dominant party at your court."

While the young Prince, now scandalised, uttered expressions which shewed his candour far more than his sagacity, the Duchessa was saying to herself:

"Does it really suit me to let Conti be disgraced? No, certainly not; for then his daughter's marriage with that honest simpleton the Marchese Crescenzi becomes impossible."

On this topic there was an endless discussion between the Duchessa and the Prince. The Prince was dazed with admiration. In consideration of the marriage of Clelia Conti to the Marchese Crescenzi, but on that express condition, which he laid down in an angry scene with the ex-governor, the Prince pardoned his attempt to poison; but, on the Duchessa's advice, banished him until the date of his daughter's marriage. The Duchessa imagined that it was no longer love that she felt for Fabrizio, but she was still passionately anxious for the marriage of Clelia Conti to the Marchese; there lay in that the vague hope that gradually she might see Fabrizio's preoccupation disappear.

The Prince, rapturously happy, wished that same evening publicly to disgrace the Minister Rassi. The Duchessa said to him with a laugh:

"Do you know a saying of Napoleon? A man placed in an exalted position, with the eyes of the whole world on him, ought never to allow himself to make violent movements. But this evening it is too late, let us leave business till to-morrow."

She wished to give herself time to consult the Conte, to whom she repeated very accurately the whole of the evening's conversation, suppressing however the frequent allusions to a promise which was poisoning her life. The Duchessa hoped to make herself so indispensable that she would be able to obtain an indefinite adjournment by saying to the Prince: "If you have the barbarity to insist upon subjecting me to that humiliation, which I will never forgive you, I leave your States the day after."

Consulted by the Duchessa as to the fate of Rassi, the Conte shewed himself most philosophic. General Fabio Conti and he went for a tour of Piedmont.

A singular difficulty arose in the trial of Fabrizio: the judges wished to acquit him by acclamation, and at the first sitting of the court. The Conte was obliged to use threats to enforce that the trial should last for at least a week, and the judges take the trouble to hear all the witnesses. "These fellows are always the same," he said to himself.

The day after his acquittal, Fabrizio del Dongo at last took possession of the place of Grand Vicar to the worthy Archbishop Landriani. On the same day the Prince signed the dispatches necessary to obtain Fabrizio's nomination as Coadjutor with eventual succession, and less than two months afterwards he was installed in that office.

Everyone complimented the Duchessa on her nephew's air of gravity; the fact was that he was in despair. The day after his deliverance, followed by the dismissal and banishment of General Fabio Conti and the Duchessa's arrival in high favour, Clelia had taken refuge with Con-

tessa Contarini, her aunt, a woman of great wealth and great age, occupied exclusively in looking after her health. Clelia could, had she wished, have seen Fabrizio; but anyone acquainted with her previous commitments who had seen her behaviour now might well have thought that with her lover's danger her love for him also had ceased. Not only did Fabrizio pass as often as he decently could before the *palazzo* Contarini, he had also succeeded, after endless trouble, in taking a little apartment opposite the windows of its first floor. On one occasion Clelia, having gone to the window without thinking, to see a procession pass, drew back at once, as though terror-stricken; she had caught sight of Fabrizio, dressed in black, but as a workman in very humble circumstances, looking at her from one of the windows of this rookery, which had panes of oiled paper, like his cell in the Torre Farnese. Fabrizio would fain have been able to persuade himself that Clelia was shunning him in consequence of her father's disgrace, which current report put down to the Duchessa; but he knew only too well another cause for this aloofness, and nothing could distract him from his melancholy.

He had been left unmoved by his acquittal, his installation in a fine office, the first that he had had to fill in his life, by his fine position in society, and finally by the assiduous court that was paid to him by all the ecclesiastics and all the devout laity in the diocese. The charming apartment that he occupied in the *palazzo* Sanseverina was no longer adequate. Greatly to her delight, the Duchessa was obliged to give up to him all the second floor of her *palazzo* and two fine rooms on the first, which were always filled with people awaiting their turn to pay their respects to the young Coadjutor. The clause securing his eventual succession had created a surprising effect in the country; people now ascribed to Fabrizio as virtues all those firm qualities in his character

which before had so greatly scandalised the poor, foolish courtiers.

It was a great lesson in philosophy to Fabrizio to find himself perfectly insensible of all these honours, and far more unhappy in this magnificent apartment, with ten flunkeys wearing his livery, than he had been in his wooden cell in the Torre Farnese, surrounded by hideous gaolers, and always in fear for his life. His mother and sister, the Duchessa V——, who came to Parma to see him in his glory, were struck by his profound melancholy. The Marchesa del Dongo, now the least romantic of women, was so greatly alarmed by it that she imagined that they must, in the Torre Farnese, have given him some slow poison. Despite her extreme discretion, she felt it her duty to speak of so extraordinary a melancholy, and Fabrizio replied only by tears.

A swarm of advantages, due to his brilliant position, produced no other effect on him than to make him ill-tempered. His brother, that vain soul gangrened by the vilest selfishness, wrote him what was almost an official letter of congratulation, and in this letter was enclosed a draft for fifty thousand francs, in order that he might, said the new Marchese, purchase horses and a carriage worthy of his name. Fabrizio sent this money to his younger sister, who was poorly married.

Conte Mosca had ordered a fine translation to be made, in Italian, of the genealogy of the family Valserra del Dongo, originally published in Latin by Fabrizio, Archbishop of Parma. He had it splendidly printed, with the Latin text on alternate pages; the engravings had been reproduced by superb lithographs made in Paris. The Duchessa had asked that a fine portrait of Fabrizio should be placed opposite that of the old Archbishop. This translation was published as being the work of Fabrizio during his first imprisonment. But all the spirit was

crushed out of our hero; even the vanity so natural to mankind; he did not deign to read a single page of this work which was attributed to himself. His social position made it incumbent upon him to present a magnificently bound copy to the Prince, who felt that he owed him some compensation for the cruel death to which he had come so near, and accorded him the grand entry into his bedchamber, a favour which confers the rank of *Excellency*.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE only moments in which Fabrizio had any chance of escaping from his profound melancholy were those which he spent hidden behind a pane, the glass of which he had had replaced by a sheet of oiled paper, in the window of his apartment opposite the *palazzo* Contarini, in which, as we know, Clelia had taken refuge; on the few occasions on which he had seen her since his leaving the citadel, he had been profoundly distressed by a striking change, and one that seemed to him of the most evil augury. Since her fall, Clelia's face had assumed a character of nobility and seriousness that was truly remarkable; one would have called her a woman of thirty. In this extraordinary change, Fabrizio caught the reflexion of some firm resolution. "At every moment of the day," he said to himself, "she is swearing to herself to be faithful to the vow she made to the Madonna, and never to see me again."

Fabrizio guessed a part only of Clelia's miseries; she knew that her father, having fallen into deep disgrace, could not return to Parma and reappear at court (without which life for him was impossible) until the day of her marriage to the Marchese Crescenzi; she wrote to her father that she desired this marriage. The General had then retired to Turin, where he was ill with grief. Truly, the counter-effect of that desperate remedy had been to add ten years to her age.

She had soon discovered that Fabrizio had a window opposite the *palazzo* Contarini; but only once had she

had the misfortune to behold him; as soon as she saw the poise of a head or a man's figure that in any way resembled his, she at once shut her eyes. Her profound piety and her confidence in the help of the Madonna were from then onwards her sole resources. She had the grief of feeling no respect for her father; the character of her future husband seemed to her perfectly lifeless and on a par with the emotional manners of high society; finally she adored a man whom she must never see again, and who at the same time had certain rights over her. She would need, after her marriage, to go and live two hundred leagues from Parma.

Fabrizio was aware of Clelia's intense modesty, he knew how greatly any extraordinary enterprise, that might form a subject for gossip, were it discovered, was bound to displease her. And yet, driven to extremes by the excess of his melancholy and by Clelia's constantly turning away her eyes from him, he made bold to try to purchase two of the servants of Signora Contarini, her aunt. One day, at nightfall, Fabrizio, dressed as a prosperous countryman, presented himself at the door of the *palazzo,* where one of the servants whom he had bribed was waiting for him; he announced himself as coming from Turin and bearing letters for Clelia from her father. The servant went to deliver the message, and took him up to an immense ante-room on the first floor of the *palazzo.* It was here that Fabrizio passed what was perhaps the most anxious quarter of an hour in his life. If Clelia rejected him, there was no more hope of peace for his mind. "To put an end to the incessant worries which my new dignity heaps upon me, I shall remove from the Church an unworthy priest, and, under an assumed name, seek refuge in some Charterhouse." At length the servant came to inform him that Signorina Clelia Conti was willing to receive him. Our hero's courage failed him completely;

he almost collapsed with fear as he climbed the stair to the second floor.

Clelia was sitting at a little table on which stood a single candle. No sooner had she recognised Fabrizio under his disguise than she rose and fled, hiding at the far end of the room.

"This is how you care for my salvation!" she cried to him, hiding her face in her hands. "You know very well, when my father was at the point of death after taking poison, I made a vow to the Madonna that I would never see you. I have never failed to keep that vow save on that day, the most wretched day of my life, when I felt myself bound by conscience to snatch you from death. It is already far more than you deserve if, by a strained and no doubt criminal interpretation of my vow, I consent to listen to you."

This last sentence so astonished Fabrizio that it took him some moments to grasp its joyful meaning. He had expected the most fiery anger, and to see Clelia fly from the room; at length his presence of mind returned, and he extinguished the one candle. Although he believed that he had understood Clelia's orders, he was trembling all over as he advanced towards the end of the room, where she had taken refuge behind a sofa; he did not know whether it would offend her if he kissed her hand; she was all tremulous with love and threw herself into his arms.

"Dear Fabrizio," she said to him, "how long you have been in coming! I can only speak to you for a moment, for I am sure it is a great sin; and when I promised never to see you, I am sure I meant also to promise not to hear you speak. But how could you pursue with such barbarity the idea of vengeance that my poor father had? For, after all, it was he who was first nearly poisoned to assist your escape. Ought you not to do something for me, who have exposed my reputation to such risks in

order to save you? And besides you are now bound absolutely in Holy Orders; you could not marry me any longer, even though I should find a way of getting rid of that odious Marchese. And then how did you dare, on the afternoon of the procession, have the effrontery to look at me in broad daylight, and so violate, in the most flagrant fashion, the holy promise that I had made to the Madonna?"

Fabrizio clasped her in his arms, carried out of himself by his surprise and joy.

A conversation which began with such a quantity of things to be said could not finish for a long time. Fabrizio told her the exact truth as to her father's banishment; the Duchessa had had no part in it whatsoever, for the simple reason that she had never for a single instant believed that the idea of poison had originated with General Conti; she had always thought that it was a little game on the part of the Raversi faction, who wished to drive Conte Mosca from Parma. This historical truth developed at great length made Clelia very happy; she was wretched at having to hate anyone who belonged to Fabrizio. Now she no longer regarded the Duchessa with a jealous eye.

The happiness established by this evening lasted only a few days.

The worthy Don Cesare arrived from Turin; and, taking courage in the perfect honesty of his heart, ventured to send in his name to the Duchessa. After asking her to give him her word that she would not abuse the confidence he was about to repose in her, he admitted that his brother, led astray by a false point of honour, and thinking himself challenged and lowered in public opinion by Fabrizio's escape, had felt bound to avenge himself.

Don Cesare had not been speaking for two minutes before his cause was won: his perfect goodness had touched

the Duchessa, who was by no means accustomed to such a spectacle. He appealed to her as a novelty.

"Hasten the marriage between the General's daughter and the Marchese Crescenzi, and I give you my word that I will do all that lies in my power to ensure that the General is received as though he were returning from a tour abroad. I shall invite him to dinner; does that satisfy you? No doubt there will be some coolness at the beginning, and the General must on no account be in a hurry to ask for his place as governor of the citadel. But you know that I have a friendly feeling for the Marchese, and I shall retain no rancour towards his father-in-law."

Fortified by these words, Don Cesare came to tell his niece that she held in her hands the life of her father, who was ill with despair. For many months past he had not appeared at any court.

Clelia decided to go to visit her father, who was hiding under an assumed name in a village near Turin; for he had supposed that the court of Parma would demand his extradition from that of Turin, to put him on his trial. She found him ill and almost insane. That same evening she wrote Fabrizio a letter threatening an eternal rupture. On receiving this letter, Fabrizio, who was developing a character closely resembling that of his mistress, went into retreat in the convent of Velleja, situated in the mountains, ten leagues from Parma. Clelia wrote him a letter of ten pages: she had sworn to him, before, that she would never marry the Marchese without his consent; now she asked this of him, and Fabrizio granted it from his retreat at Velleja, in a letter full of the purest friendship.

On receiving this letter, the friendliness of which, it must be admitted, irritated her, Clelia herself fixed the day of her wedding, the festivities surrounding which

enhanced still further the brilliance with which the court of Parma, that winter, shone.

Ranuccio-Ernesto V was a miser at heart; but he was desperately in love, and he hoped to establish the Duchessa permanently at his court; he begged his mother to accept a very considerable sum of money, and to give entertainments. The Grand Mistress contrived to make an admirable use of this increase of wealth; the entertainments at Parma, that winter, recalled the great days of the court of Milan and of that charming Prince Eugène, Viceroy of Italy, whose virtues have left so lasting a memory.

His duties as Coadjutor had summoned Fabrizio back to Parma; but he announced that, for spiritual reasons, he would continue his retreat in the small apartment which his protector, Monsignor Landriani, had forced him to take in the Archbishop's Palace; and he went to shut himself up there, accompanied by a single servant. Thus he was present at none of the brilliant festivities of the court, an abstention which won for him at Parma, and throughout his future diocese, an immense reputation for sanctity. An unforeseen consequence of this retreat, inspired in Fabrizio solely by his profound and hopeless sorrow, was that the good Archbishop Landriani, who had always loved him, began to be slightly jealous of him. The Archbishop felt it his duty (and rightly) to attend all the festivities at court, as is the custom in Italy. On these occasions he wore a ceremonial costume, which was, more or less, the same as that in which he was to be seen in the choir of his Cathedral. The hundreds of servants gathered in the colonnaded ante-chamber of the Palace never failed to rise and ask for a blessing from Monsignore, who was kind enough to stop and give it them. It was in one of these moments of solemn silence that Monsignor Landriani heard a voice say: "Our Arch-

bishop goes out to balls, and Monsignor del Dongo never leaves his room!"

From that moment the immense favour that Fabrizio had enjoyed in the Archbishop's Palace was at an end; but he could now fly with his own wings. All this conduct, which had been inspired only by the despair in which Clelia's marriage plunged him, was regarded as due to a simple and sublime piety, and the faithful read, as a work of edification, the translation of the genealogy of his family, which reeked of the most insane vanity. The booksellers prepared a lithographed edition of his portrait, which was bought up in a few days, and mainly by the humbler classes; the engraver, in his ignorance, had reproduced round Fabrizio's portrait a number of the ornaments which ought only to be found on the portraits of Bishops, and to which a Coadjutor could have no claim. The Archbishop saw one of these portraits, and his rage knew no bounds; he sent for Fabrizio and addressed him in the harshest words, and in terms which his passion rendered at times extremely coarse. Fabrizio required no effort, as may well be imagined, to conduct himself as Fénelon would have done in similar circumstances; he listened to the Archbishop with all the humility and respect possible; and, when the prelate had ceased speaking, told him the whole story of the translation of the genealogy made by Conte Mosca's orders, at the time of his first imprisonment. It had been published with a worldly object, which had always seemed to him hardly befitting a man of his cloth. As for the portrait, he had been entirely unconcerned with the second edition, as with the first; and the bookseller having sent to him, at the Archbishop's Palace, during his retreat, twenty-four copies of this second edition, he had sent his servant to buy a twenty-fifth; and, having learned in this way that the

portrait was being sold for thirty soldi, he had sent a hundred francs in payment of the twenty-four copies.

All these arguments, albeit set forth in the most reasonable terms by a man who had many other sorrows in his heart, lashed the Archbishop's anger to madness; he went so far as to accuse Fabrizio of hypocrisy.

"That is what these common people are like," Fabrizio said to himself, "even when they have brains!"

He had at the time a more serious anxiety; this was his aunt's letters, in which she absolutely insisted on his coming back to occupy his apartment in the *palazzo* Sanseverina, or at least coming to see her sometimes. There Fabrizio was certain of hearing talk of the splendid festivities given by the Marchese Crescenzi on the occasion of his marriage; and this was what he was not sure of his ability to endure without creating a scene.

When the marriage ceremony was celebrated, for eight whole days in succession Fabrizio vowed himself to the most complete silence, after ordering his servant and the members of the Archbishop's household with whom he had any dealings never to utter a word to him.

Monsignor Landriani having learned of this new affectation sent for Fabrizio far more often than usual, and tried to engage him in long conversations; he even obliged him to attend conferences with certain Canons from the country, who complained that the Archbishop had infringed their privileges. Fabrizio took all these things with the perfect indifference of a man who has other thoughts on his mind. "It would be better for me," he thought, "to become a Carthusian; I should suffer less among the rocks of Velleja."

He went to see his aunt, and could not restrain his tears as he embraced her. She found him so greatly altered, his eyes, still more enlarged by his extreme thinness, had so much the air of starting from his head, and he him-

self presented so pinched and unhappy an appearance, that at this first encounter the Duchessa herself could not restrain her tears either; but a moment later, when she had reminded herself that all this change in the appearance of this handsome young man had been caused by Clelia's marriage, her feelings were almost equal in vehemence to those of the Archbishop, although more skilfully controlled. She was so barbarous as to discourse at length of certain picturesque details which had been a feature of the charming entertainments given by the Marchese Crescenzi. Fabrizio made no reply; but his eyes closed slightly with a convulsive movement, and he became even paler than he already was, which at first sight would have seemed impossible. In these moments of keen grief, his pallor assumed a greenish hue.

Conte Mosca joined them, and what he then saw, a thing which seemed to him incredible, finally and completely cured him of the jealousy which Fabrizio had never ceased to inspire in him. This able man employed the most delicate and ingenious turns of speech in an attempt to restore to Fabrizio some interest in the things of this world. The Conte had always felt for him a great esteem and a certain degree of friendship; this friendship, being no longer counterbalanced by jealousy, became at that moment almost devotion. "There's no denying it, he has paid dearly for his fine fortune," he said to himself, going over the tale of Fabrizio's misadventures. On the pretext of letting him see the picture by the Parmigianino which the Prince had sent to the Duchessa, the Conte drew Fabrizio aside.

"Now, my friend, let us speak as man to man: can I help you in any way? You need not be afraid of any questions on my part; still, can money be of use to you, can power help you? Speak, I am at your orders; if you prefer to write, write to me."

Fabrizio embraced him tenderly and spoke of the picture.

"Your conduct is a masterpiece of the finest policy," the Conte said to him, returning to the light tone of their previous conversation; "you are laying up for yourself a very agreeable future, the Prince respects you, the people venerate you, your little worn black coat gives Monsignor Landriani some bad nights. I have some experience of life, and I can swear to you that I should not know what advice to give you to improve upon what I see. Your first step in the world at the age of twenty-five has carried you to perfection. People talk of you a great deal at court; and do you know to what you owe that distinction, unique at your age? To the little worn black coat. The Duchessa and I have at our disposal, as you know, Petrarch's old house on that fine slope in the middle of the forest, near the Po; if ever you are weary of the little mischief-makings of envy, it has occurred to me that you might be the successor of Petrarch, whose fame will enhance your own." The Conte was racking his brains to make a smile appear on that anchorite face, but failed. What made the change more striking was that, before this latest phase, if Fabrizio's features had a defect, it was that of presenting sometimes, at the wrong moment, an expression of gaiety and pleasure.

The Conte did not let him go without telling him that, notwithstanding his retreat, it would be perhaps an affectation if he did not appear at court the following Saturday, which was the Princess's birthday. These words were a dagger-thrust to Fabrizio. "Great God!" he thought, "what have I let myself in for here?" He could not think without shuddering of the meeting that might occur at court. This idea absorbed every other; he thought that the only thing left to him was to arrive at the Palace

at the precise moment at which the doors of the rooms would be opened.

And so it happened that the name of Monsignor del Dongo was one of the first to be announced on the evening of the gala reception, and the Princess greeted him with the greatest possible distinction. Fabrizio's eyes were fastened on the clock, and, at the instant at which it marked the twentieth minute of his presence in the room, he was rising to take his leave, when the Prince joined his mother. After paying his respects to him for some moments, Fabrizio was again, by a skilful stratagem, making his way to the door, when there befell at his expense one of those little trifling points of court etiquette which the Grand Mistress knew so well how to handle: the Chamberlain in waiting ran after him to tell him that he had been put down to make up the Prince's table at whist. At Parma this was a signal honour, and far above the rank which the Coadjutor held in society. To play whist with the Prince was a marked honour even for the Archbishop. At the Chamberlain's words Fabrizio felt his heart pierced, and although a lifelong enemy of anything like a scene in public, he was on the point of going to tell him that he had been seized with a sudden fit of giddiness; but he reflected that he would be exposed to questions and polite expressions of sympathy, more intolerable even than the game. That day he had a horror of speaking.

Fortunately the General of the Friars Minor happened to be one of the prominent personages who had come to pay their respects to the Princess. This friar, a most learned man, a worthy rival of the Fontanas and the Duvoisins, had taken his place in a far corner of the room: Fabrizio took up a position facing him, so that he could not see the door, and began to talk theology. But he could not prevent his ear from hearing a servant

announce the Signor Marchese and Signora Marchesa Crescenzi. Fabrizio, to his surprise, felt a violent impulse of anger.

"If I were Borso Valserra," he said to himself (this being one of the generals of the first Sforza), "I should go and stab that lout of a Marchese, and with that very same dagger with the ivory handle which Clelia gave me on that happy day, and I should teach him to have the insolence to present himself with his Marchesa in a room in which I am."

His expression altered so greatly that the General of the Friars Minor said to him:

"Does Your Excellency feel unwell?"

"I have a raging headache . . . these lights are hurting me . . . and I am staying here only because I have been put down for the Prince's whist-table."

On hearing this the General of the Friars Minor, who was of plebeian origin, was so disconcerted that, not knowing what to do, he began to bow to Fabrizio, who, for his part, far more seriously disturbed than the General, started to talk with a strange volubility: he noticed that there was a great silence in the room behind him, but would not turn round to look. Suddenly a baton tapped a desk; a *ritornello* was played, and the famous Signora P—— sang that air of Cimarosa, at one time so popular: *Quelle pupille tenere!*

Fabrizio stood firm throughout the opening bars, but presently his anger melted away, and he felt a compelling need to shed tears. "Great God!" he said to himself, "what a ridiculous scene! and with my cloth, too!" He felt it wiser to talk about himself.

"These violent headaches, when I do anything to thwart them, as I am doing this evening," he said to the General of the Minorites, "end in floods of tears which provide food for scandal in a man of our calling; and so I request

Your Illustrious Reverence to allow me to look at him while I cry, and not to pay any attention."

"Our Father Provincial at Catanzaro suffers from the same disability," said the General of the Minorites. And he began in an undertone a long narrative.

The absurdity of this story, which included the details of the Father Provincial's evening meals, made Fabrizio smile, a thing which had not happened to him for a long time; but presently he ceased to listen to the General of the Minorites. Signora P—— was singing, with divine talent, an air of Pergolese (the Duchessa had a fondness for old music). She was interrupted by a slight sound, a few feet away from Fabrizio; for the first time in the evening, he turned his head, to look. The chair that had been the cause of this faint creak in the woodwork of the floor was occupied by the Marchesa Crescenzi whose eyes, filled with tears, met the direct gaze of Fabrizio's which were in much the same state. The Marchesa bent her head; Fabrizio continued to gaze at her for some moments: he made a thorough study of that head loaded with diamonds; but his gaze expressed anger and disdain. Then, saying to himself: *"and my eyes shall never look upon you,"* he turned back to his Father General, and said to him:

"There, now, my weakness is taking me worse than ever."

And indeed, Fabrizio wept hot tears for more than half an hour. Fortunately, a Symphony of Mozart, horribly mutilated, as is the way in Italy, came to his rescue and helped him to dry his tears.

He stood firm and did not turn his eyes towards the Marchesa Crescenzi; but Signora P—— sang again, and Fabrizio's soul, soothed by his tears, arrived at a state of perfect repose. Then life appeared to him in a new light. "Am I pretending," he asked himself, "to be able

to forget her in the first few moments? Would such a thing be possible?" The idea came to him: "Can I be more unhappy than I have been for the last two months? Then, if nothing can add to my anguish, why resist the pleasure of seeing her? She has forgotten her vows; she is fickle: are not all women so? But who could deny her a heavenly beauty? She has a look in her eyes that sends me into ecstasies, whereas I have to make an effort to force myself to look at the women who are considered the greatest beauties! Very well, why not let myself be enraptured? It will be at least a moment of respite."

Fabrizio had some knowledge of men, but no experience of the passions, otherwise he would have told himself that this momentary pleasure, to which he was about to yield, would render futile all the efforts that he had been making for the last two months to forget Clelia.

That poor woman would not have come to this party save under compulsion from her husband; even then she wished to slip away after half an hour, on the excuse of her health, but the Marchese assured her that to send for her carriage to go away, when many carriages were still arriving, would be a thing absolutely without precedent, which might even be interpreted as an indirect criticism of the party given by the Princess.

"In my capacity as *Cavaliere d'onore,*" the Marchese added, "I have to remain in the drawing-room at the Princess's orders, until everyone has gone. There may be and no doubt will be orders to be given to the servants, they are so careless! And would you have a mere Gentleman Usher usurp that honour?"

Clelia resigned herself; she had not seen Fabrizio; she still hoped that he might not have come to this party. But at the moment when the concert was about to begin, the Princess having given the ladies leave to be seated, Clelia, who was not at all alert in that sort of thing, let

all the best places near the Princess be snatched from her, and was obliged to go and look for a chair at the end of the room, in the very corner to which Fabrizio had withdrawn. When she reached her chair, the costume, unusual in such a place, of the General of the Friars Minor caught her eye, and at first she did not observe the other man, slim and dressed in a plain black coat, who was talking to him; nevertheless a certain secret impulse brought her gaze to rest on this man. "Everyone here is wearing uniform, or a richly embroidered coat: who can that young man be in such a plain black coat?" She was looking at him, profoundly attentive, when a lady, taking her seat beside her, caused her chair to move. Fabrizio turned his head: she did not recognise him, he had so altered. At first she said to herself: "That is like him, it must be his elder brother; but I thought there were only a few years between them, and that is a man of forty." Suddenly she recognised him by a movement of his lips.

"Poor man, how he has suffered!" she said to herself. And she bent her head, bowed down by grief, and not in fidelity to her vow. Her heart was convulsed with pity; "after nine months in prison, he did not look anything like that." She did not look at him again; but, without actually turning her eyes in his direction, she could see all his movements.

After the concert, she saw him go up to the Prince's card-table, placed a few feet from the throne; she breathed a sigh of relief when Fabrizio was thus removed to a certain distance from her.

But the Marchese Crescenzi had been greatly annoyed to see his wife relegated to a place so far from the throne; all evening he had been occupied in persuading a lady seated three chairs away from the Princess, whose husband was under a financial obligation to him, that

she would do well to change places with the Marchesa. The poor woman resisting, as was natural, he went in search of the debtor husband, who let his better half hear the sad voice of reason, and finally the Marchese had the pleasure of effecting the exchange; he went to find his wife. "You are always too modest," he said to her. "Why walk like that with downcast eyes? Anyone would take you for of those cits' wives astonished at finding themselves here, whom everyone else is astonished, too, to see here. That fool of a Grand Mistress does nothing else but collect them! And they talk of retarding the advance of Jacobinism! Remember that your husband occupies the first position, among the gentlemen, at the Princess's court; and that even should the Republicans succeed in suppressing the court, and even the nobility, your husband would still be the richest man in this State. That is an idea which you do not keep sufficiently in your head."

The chair on which the Marchese had the pleasure of installing his wife was but six paces from the Prince's card-table: she saw Fabrizio only in profile, but she found him grown so thin, he had, above all, the air of being so far above everything that might happen in this world, he who before would never let any incident pass without making his comment, that she finally arrived at the terrible conclusion: Fabrizio had altogether changed; he had forgotten her; if he had grown so thin, that was the effect of the severe fasts to which his piety subjected him. Clelia was confirmed in this sad thought by the conversation of all her neighbours: the name of the Coadjutor was on every tongue; they sought a reason for the signal favour which they saw conferred upon him: for him, so young, to be admitted to the Prince's table! They marvelled at the polite indifference and the air of

pride with which he threw down his cards, even when he had His Highness for a partner.

"But this is incredible!" cried certain old courtiers; "his aunt's favour has quite turned his head. . . . But, mercifully, it won't last; our Sovereign does not like people to put on these little airs of superiority." The Duchessa approached the Prince; the courtiers, who kept at a most respectful distance from the card-table, so that they could hear only a few stray words of the Prince's conversation, noticed that Fabrizio blushed deeply. "His aunt has been teaching him a lesson," they said to themselves, "about those grand airs of indifference." Fabrizio had just caught the sound of Clelia's voice, she was replying to the Princess, who, in making her tour of the ball-room, had addressed a few words to the wife of her *Cavaliere d'onore*. The moment arrived when Fabrizio had to change his place at the whist-table; he then found himself directly opposite Clelia, and gave himself up repeatedly to the pleasure of contemplating her. The poor Marchesa, feeling his gaze rest upon her, lost countenance altogether. More than once she forgot what she owed to her vow: in her desire to read what was going on in Fabrizio's heart, she fixed her eyes on him.

The Prince's game ended, the ladies rose to go into the supper-room. There was some slight confusion. Fabrizio found himself close to Clelia; his mind was still quite made up, but he happened to recognise a faint perfume which she used on her clothes; this sensation overthrew all the resolutions that he had made. He approached her and repeated, in an undertone and as though he were speaking to himself, two lines from that sonnet of Petrarch which he had sent her from Lake Maggiore, printed on a silk handkerchief:

"Nessun visse giammai più di me lieto;
Nessun vive più tristo e giorni e notti."

"No, he has not forgotten me," Clelia told herself with a transport of joy. "That fine soul is not inconstant!"

> "Esser po in prima ogni impossibil cosa
> Ch'altri che morte od ella sani il colpo
> Ch'Amor co' suoi begli occhi al cor m'impresse,"

Clelia ventured to repeat to herself these lines of Petrarch.

The Princess withdrew immediately after supper; the Prince had gone with her to her room and did not appear again in the reception rooms. As soon as this became known, everyone wished to leave at once; there was complete confusion in the ante-rooms; Clelia found herself close to Fabrizio; the profound misery depicted on his features moved her to pity. "Let us forget the past," she said to him, "and keep this reminder of *friendship*." As she said these words, she held out her fan so that he might take it.

Everything changed in Fabrizio's eyes; in an instant he was another man; the following day he announced that his retreat was at an end, and returned to occupy his magnificent apartment in the *palazzo* Sanseverina. The Archbishop said, and believed, that the favour which the Prince had shewn him in admitting him to his game had completely turned the head of this new saint: the Duchessa saw that he had come to terms with Clelia. This thought, coming to intensify the misery that was caused her by the memory of a fatal promise, finally decided her to absent herself for a while. People marvelled at her folly. What! Leave the court at the moment when the favour that she enjoyed appeared to have no bounds! The Conte, perfectly happy since he had seen that there was no love between Fabrizio and the Duchessa, said to his friend: "This new Prince is virtue incarnate, but I have called him *that boy*: will he ever forgive me? I can see only one way of putting myself back in his good books, that is absence.

I am going to shew myself a perfect model of courtesy and respect, after which I shall be ill, and shall ask leave to retire. You will allow me that, now that Fabrizio's fortune is assured. But will you make me the immense sacrifice," he added, laughing, "of exchanging the sublime title of Duchessa for another greatly inferior? For my own amusement, I am leaving everything here in an inextricable confusion; I had four or five workers in my various Ministries, I placed them all on the pension list two months ago, because they read the French newspapers; and I have filled their places with blockheads of the first order.

"After our departure, the Prince will find himself in such difficulties that, in spite of the horror that he feels for Rassi's character, I have no doubt that he will be obliged to recall him, and I myself am only awaiting an order from the tyrant who disposes of my fate to write a letter of tender friendship to my friend Rassi, and tell him that I have every reason to hope that presently justice will be done to his merits."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THIS serious conversation was held on the day following Fabrizio's return to the *palazzo* Sanseverina; the Duchessa was still overcome by the joy that radiated from Fabrizio's every action. "So," she said to herself, "that little saint has deceived me! She has not been able to hold out against her lover for three months even."

The certainty of a happy ending had given that pusillanimous creature, the young Prince, the courage to love; he knew something of the preparations for flight that were being made at the *palazzo* Sanseverina; and his French valet, who had little belief in the virtue of great ladies, gave him courage with respect to the Duchessa. Ernesto V allowed himself to take a step for which he was severely reproved by the Princess and all the sensible people at court; to the populace it appeared to set the seal on the astonishing favour which the Duchessa enjoyed. The Prince went to see her in her *palazzo*.

"You are leaving," he said to her in a serious tone which the Duchessa thought odious; "you are leaving, you are going to play me false and violate your oath! And yet, if I had delayed ten minutes in granting you Fabrizio's pardon, he would have been dead. And you leave me in this wretched state! When but for your oath I should never have had the courage to love you as I do! Have you no sense of honour, then?"

"Think for a little, Prince. In the whole of your life has there been a period equal in happiness to the four

months that have just gone by? Your glory as Sovereign, and, I venture to think, your happiness as a man, have never risen to such a pitch. This is the compact that I propose; if you deign to consent to it, I shall not be your mistress for a fleeting instant, and by virtue of an oath extorted by fear, but I shall consecrate every moment of my life to procuring your happiness, I shall be always what I have been for the last four months, and perhaps love will come to crown friendship. I would not swear to the contrary."

"Very well," said the Prince, delighted, "take on another part, be something more still, reign at once over my heart and over my States, be my Prime Minister; I offer you such a marriage as is permitted by the regrettable conventions of my rank; we have an example close at hand: the King of Naples has recently married the Duchessa di Partana. I offer you all that I have to offer, a marriage of the same sort. I am going to add a distressing political consideration to shew you that I am no longer a mere boy, and that I have thought of everything. I lay no stress on the condition which I impose on myself of being the last Sovereign of my race, the sorrow of seeing in my lifetime the Great Powers dispose of my succession; I bless these very genuine drawbacks, since they offer me additional means of proving to you my esteem and my passion."

The Duchessa did not hesitate for an instant; the Prince bored her, and the Conte seemed to her perfectly suitable; there was only one man in the world who could be preferred to him. Besides, she ruled the Conte, and the Prince, dominated by the exigencies of his rank, would more or less rule her. Then, too, he might become unfaithful to her, and take mistresses; the difference of age would seem, in a very few years, to give him the right to do so.

From the first moment, the prospect of boredom had settled the whole question; however, the Duchessa, who wished to be as charming as possible, asked leave to reflect.

It would take too long to recount here the almost loving turns of speech and the infinitely graceful terms in which she managed to clothe her refusal. The Prince flew into a rage; he saw all his happiness escaping. What was to become of him when the Duchessa had left his court? Besides, what a humiliation to be refused! "And what will my French valet say when I tell him of my defeat?"

The Duchessa knew how to calm the Prince, and to bring the discussion back gradually to her actual terms.

"If Your Highness deigns to consent not to press for the fulfilment of a fatal promise, and one that is horrible in my eyes, as making me incur my own contempt, I shall spend my life at his court, and that court will always be what it has been this winter; every moment of my time will be devoted to contributing to his happiness as a man, and to his glory as a Sovereign. If he insists on binding me by my oath, he will be destroying the rest of my life, and will at once see me leave his States, never to return. The day on which I shall have lost my honour will be also the last day on which I shall set eyes on you."

But the Prince was obstinate, like all pusillanimous creatures; moreover his pride as a man and a Sovereign was irritated by the refusal of his hand; he thought of all the difficulties which he would have had to overcome to make this marriage be accepted, difficulties which, nevertheless, he was determined to conquer.

For the next three hours, the same arguments were repeated on either side, often interspersed with very sharp words. The Prince exclaimed:

"Do you then wish me to believe, Signora, that you are lacking in honour? If I had hesitated so long on the day when General Fabio Conti was giving Fabrizio poison,

you would at present be occupied in erecting a tomb to him in one of the churches of Parma."

"Not at Parma, certainly, in this land of poisoners."

"Very well then, go, Signora Duchessa," retorted the Prince angrily, "and you will take with you my contempt."

As he was leaving, the Duchessa said to him in a whisper:

"Very well, be here at ten o'clock this evening, in the strictest incognito, and you shall have your fool's bargain. You will then have seen me for the last time, and I would have devoted my life to making you as happy as an Absolute Prince can be in this age of Jacobins. And think what your court will be when I am no longer here to extricate it by force from its innate dulness and mischief."

"For your part, you refuse the crown of Parma, and more than the crown, for you would not have been the ordinary Princess, married for political reasons and without being loved; my heart is all yours, and you would have seen yourself for ever the absolute mistress of my actions as of my government."

"Yes, but the Princess your mother would have the right to look down upon me as a vile intriguer."

"What then; I should banish the Princess with a pension."

There were still three quarters of an hour of cutting retorts. The Prince, who had a delicate nature, could not make up his mind either to enjoy his rights, or to let the Duchessa go. He had been told that after the first moment has been obtained, no matter how, women come back.

Driven from the house by the indignant Duchessa, he had the temerity to return, trembling all over and extremely unhappy, at three minutes to ten. At half past ten the Duchessa stepped into her carriage and started for Bologna. She wrote to the Conte as soon as she was outside the Prince's States:

"The sacrifice has been made. Do not ask me to be merry for a month. I shall not see Fabrizio again; I await you at Bologna, and when you please I will be the Contessa Mosca. I ask you one thing only, do not ever force me to appear again in the land I am leaving, and remember always that instead of an income of 150,000 lire, you are going to have thirty or forty thousand at the very most. All the fools have been watching you with gaping mouths, and for the future you will be respected only so long as you demean yourself to understand all their petty ideas. *Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin!*"

A week later their marriage was celebrated at Perugia, in a church in which the Conte's ancestors were buried. The Prince was in despair. The Duchessa had received from him three or four couriers, and had not failed to return his letters to him, in fresh envelopes, with their seals unbroken. Ernesto V had bestowed a magnificent pension on the Conte, and had given the Grand Cordon of his order to Fabrizio.

"That is what pleased me most in his farewells. We parted," said the Conte to the new Contessa Mosca della Rovere, "the best friends in the world; he gave me a Spanish Grand Cordon, and diamonds which are worth quite as much as the Grand Cordon. He told me that he would make me a Duca, but he wished to keep that in reserve, as a way of bringing you back to his States. And so I am charged to inform you, a fine mission for a husband, that if you deign to return to Parma, be it only for a month, I shall be made Duca, with whatever title you may select, and you shall have a fine estate."

This the Duchessa refused with an expression of horror.

After the scene that had occurred at the ball at court, which seemed fairly decisive, Clelia seemed to retain no memory of the love which she had for a moment reciprocated; the most violent remorse had seized hold of that

virtuous and Christian soul. All this Fabrizio understood quite well, and in spite of all the hopes that he sought to entertain, a sombre misery took possession similarly of his soul. This time, however, his misery did not send him into retreat, as on the occasion of Clelia's marriage.

The Conte had requested *his nephew* to keep him exactly informed of all that went on at court, and Fabrizio, who was beginning to realise all that he owed to him, had promised himself that he would carry out this mission faithfully.

Like everyone in the town and at court, Fabrizio had no doubt that the Conte intended to return to the Ministry, and with more power than he had ever had before. The Conte's forecasts were not long in taking effect: in less than six weeks after his departure, Rassi was Prime Minister, Fabio Conti Minister of War, and the prisons, which the Conte had nearly emptied, began to fill again. The Prince, in summoning these men to power, thought that he was avenging himself on the Duchessa; he was madly in love and above all hated Conte Mosca as a rival.

Fabrizio had plenty to do; Monsignor Landriani, now seventy-two years old, had declined into a state of great languor, and as he now hardly ever left his Palace, it fell to his Coadjutor to take his place in almost all his functions.

The Marchesa Crescenzi, crushed by remorse, and frightened by her spiritual director, had found an excellent way of withdrawing herself from Fabrizio's gaze. Taking as an excuse the last months of a first confinement, she had given herself as a prison her own *palazzo;* but this *palazzo* had an immense garden. Fabrizio managed to find a way into it, and placed on the path which Clelia most affected flowers tied up in nosegays, and arranged in such a way as to form a language, like the flowers which she had sent up to him every evening in the last days of his imprisonment in the Torre Farnese.

The Marchesa was greatly annoyed by this overture; the motions of her soul were swayed at one time by remorse, at another by passion. For several months she did not allow herself to go down once to the garden of her *palazzo;* she had scruples even about looking at it from the windows.

Fabrizio began to think that she was parted from him for ever, and despair began to seize hold of his soul also. The world in which he was obliged to live disgusted him unspeakably, and had he not been convinced in his heart that the Conte could not find peace of mind apart from his Ministry, he would have gone into retreat in his small apartment in the Archbishop's Palace. It would have been pleasant for him to live entirely in his thoughts and never more to hear the human voice save in the exercise of his functions.

"But," he said to himself, "in the interest of the Conte and Contessa Mosca, there is no one to take my place."

The Prince continued to treat him with a distinction which placed him in the highest rank at that court, and this favour he owed in great measure to himself. The extreme reserve which, in Fabrizio, sprang from an indifference bordering on disgust for all the affections or petty passions that fill the lives of men, had pricked the young Prince's vanity; he often remarked that Fabrizio had as much character as his aunt. The Prince's candid nature had in part perceived a truth: namely that no one approached him with the same feelings in his heart as Fabrizio. What could not escape the notice even of the common herd of courtiers was that the consideration won by Fabrizio was not that given to a mere Coadjutor, but actually exceeded the respect which the Sovereign shewed to the Archbishop. Fabrizio wrote to the Conte that if ever the Prince had enough intelligence to perceive the mess into which the Ministers, Rassi, Fabio Conti, Zurla

and others of like capacity had thrown his affairs, he, Fabrizio, would be the natural channel through which he would take action without unduly compromising his self-esteem.

"But for the memory of those fatal words, *that boy,*" he told Contessa Mosca, "applied by a man of talent to an august personage, the august personage would already have cried: 'Return at once and rid me of these rascals!' At this very moment, if the wife of the man of talent deigned to make an advance, of however little significance, the Conte would be recalled with joy: but he will return through a far nobler door, if he is willing to wait until the fruit is ripe. Meanwhile everyone is bored to death at the Princess's drawing-rooms, they have nothing to amuse them but the absurdity of Rassi, who, now that he is a Conte, has become a maniac for nobility. Strict orders have just been issued that anyone who cannot produce eight quarterings of nobility *must no longer dare* to present himself at the Princess's evenings (these are the exact words of the proclamation). All the men who already possess the right to enter the great gallery in the mornings, and to remain in the Sovereign's presence when he passes on his way to mass, are to continue to enjoy that privilege; but newcomers will have to shew proof of their eight quarterings. Which has given rise to the saying that it is clear that Rassi gives no quarter."

It may be imagined that such letters were not entrusted to the post. Contessa Mosca replied from Naples: "We have a concert every Thursday, and a *conversazione* on Sundays; there is no room to move in our rooms. The Conte is enchanted with his excavations, he devotes a thousand francs a month to them, and has just brought some labourers down from the mountains of the Abruzzi, who cost him only three and twenty soldi a day. You must really come and see us. This is the twentieth time and

more, you ungrateful man, that I have given you this invitation."

Fabrizio had no thought of obeying the summons: the letter which he wrote every day to the Conte or Contessa seemed in itself an almost insupportable burden. The reader will forgive him when he learns that a whole year passed in this way, without his being able to address a single word to the Marchesa. All his attempts to establish some correspondence with her had been repulsed with horror. The habitual silence which, in his boredom with life, Fabrizio preserved everywhere, except in the exercise of his functions and at court, added to the spotless purity of his morals, made him the object of a veneration so extraordinary that he finally decided to pay heed to his aunt's advice.

"The Prince has such a veneration for you," she wrote to him, "that you must be on the look-out for disgrace; he will lavish on you signs of indifference, and the atrocious contempt of the courtiers will follow on the heels of his. These petty despots, however honest they may be, change like the fashions, and for the same reason: boredom. You will find no strength to resist the Sovereign's caprices except in preaching. You improvise so well in verse! Try to speak for half an hour on religion; you will utter heresies at first; but hire a learned and discreet theologian to help you with your sermons, and warn you of your mistakes, you can put them right the day after."

The kind of misery which a crossed love brings to the soul has this effect, that everything which requires attention and action becomes an atrocious burden. But Fabrizio told himself that his influence with the people, if he acquired any, might one day be of use to his aunt, and also to the Conte, his veneration for whom increased daily, as

his public life taught him to realise the dishonesty of mankind. He decided to preach, and his success, prepared for him by his thinness and his worn coat, was without precedent. People found in his utterances a fragrance of profound sadness, which, combined with his charming appearance and the stories of the high favour that he enjoyed at court, captivated every woman's heart. They invented the legend that he had been one of the most gallant captains in Napoleon's army. Soon this absurd rumour had passed beyond the stage of doubt. Seats were reserved in the churches in which he was to preach; the poor used to take their places there as a speculation from five o'clock in the morning.

His success was such that Fabrizio finally conceived the idea, which altered his whole nature, that, were it only from simple curiosity, the Marchesa Crescenzi might very well come one day to listen to one of his sermons. Suddenly the enraptured public became aware that his talent had increased twofold. He allowed himself, when he was moved, to use imagery the boldness of which would have made the most practised orators shudder; at times, forgetting himself completely, he gave way to moments of passionate inspiration, and his whole audience melted in tears. But it was in vain that his *aggrottato* eye sought among all the faces turned towards the pulpit that one face the presence of which would have been so great an event for him.

"But if ever I do have that happiness," he said to himself, "either I shall be taken ill, or I shall stop short altogether." To obviate the latter misfortune, he had composed a sort of prayer, tender and impassioned, which he always placed in the pulpit, on a footstool; his plan was to begin reading this piece, should the Marchesa's presence ever place him at a loss for a word.

He learned one day, through those of the Marchesa's

servants who were in his pay, that orders had been given to prepare for the following evening the box of the *casa* Crescenzi at the principal theatre. It was a year since the Marchesa had appeared at any public spectacle, and it was a tenor who was creating a furore and filling the house every evening that was making her depart from her habit. Fabrizio's first impulse was an intense joy. "At last I can look at her for a whole evening! They say she is very pale." And he sought to imagine what that charming face could be like, with its colours half obliterated by the war that had been waged in her soul.

His friend Lodovico, in consternation at what he called his master's madness, found, with great difficulty, a box on the fourth tier, almost opposite the Marchesa's. An idea suggested itself to Fabrizio; "I hope to put it into her head to come to a sermon, and I shall choose a church that is quite small, so as to be able to see her properly." As a rule, Fabrizio preached at three o'clock. On the morning of the day on which the Marchesa was to go to the theatre, he gave out that, as he would be detained all day at the Palace by professional duties, he would preach as a special exception at half past eight in the evening, in the little church of Santa Maria della Visitazione, situated precisely opposite one of the wings of the *palazzo* Crescenzi. Lodovico, on his behalf, presented an enormous quantity of candles to the nuns of the Visitation, with the request that they would illuminate their church during the day. He had a whole company of Grenadier Guards, a sentry was posted, with fixed bayonet, outside each chapel, to prevent pilfering.

The sermon was announced for half past eight only, and by two o'clock the church was completely filled; one may imagine the din that there was in the quiet street over which towered the noble structure of the *palazzo* Crescenzi. Fabrizio had published the announcement that, in

honour of Our Lady of Pity, he would preach on the pity which a generous soul ought to feel for one in misfortune, even when he is guilty.

Disguised with all possible care, Fabrizio reached his box in the theatre at the moment when the doors were opened, and when there were still no lights. The performance began about eight o'clock, and a few minutes later he had that joy which no mind can conceive that has not also felt it, he saw the door of the Crescenzi box open; a little later the Marchesa appeared; he had not had so clear a view of her since the day on which she had given him her fan. Fabrizio thought that he would suffocate with joy; he was conscious of emotions so extraordinary that he said to himself: "Perhaps I am going to die! What a charming way of ending this sad life! Perhaps I am going to collapse in this box; the faithful gathered at the Visitation will wait for me in vain, and to-morrow they will learn that their future Archbishop forgot himself in a box at the Opera, and, what is more, disguised as a servant and wearing livery! Farewell my whole reputation! And what does my reputation mean to me?"

However, about a quarter to nine, Fabrizio collected himself with an effort; he left his box on the fourth tier and had the greatest difficulty in reaching, on foot, the place where he was to doff his livery and put on a more suitable costume. It was not until nearly nine o'clock that he arrived at the Visitation, in such a state of pallor and weakness that the rumour went round the church that the Signor Coadiutore would not be able to preach that evening. One may imagine the attention that was lavished on him by the Sisters at the grille of their inner parlour, to which he had retired. These ladies talked incessantly; Fabrizio asked to be left alone for a few moments, then hastened to the pulpit. One of his assistants had informed

him, about three o'clock, that the Church of the Visitation was packed to the doors, but with people of the lowest class, attracted apparently by the spectacle of the illumination. On entering the pulpit, Fabrizio was agreeably surprised to find all the chairs occupied by young men of fashion, and by people of the highest distinction.

A few words of excuse began his sermon, and were received with suppressed cries of admiration. Next came the impassioned description of the unfortunate wretch whom one must pity, to honour worthily the *Madonna della Pietà,* who, herself, had so greatly suffered when on earth. The orator was greatly moved; there were moments when he could barely pronounce his words so as to be heard in every part of this small church. In the eyes of all the women, and of a good many of the men, he had himself the air of the wretch whom one ought to pity, so extreme was his pallor. A few minutes after the words of apology with which he had begun his discourse, it was noticed that he was not in his normal state; it was felt that his melancholy, this evening, was more profound and more tender than usual. Once he was seen to have tears in his eyes; in a moment there rose through the congregation a general sob, so loud that the sermon was completely interrupted.

This first interruption was followed by a dozen others; his listeners uttered cries of admiration, there were outbursts of tears; one heard at every moment such exclamations as: *"Ah! Santa Madonna!" "Ah! Gran Dio!"* The emotion was so general and so irrepressible in this select public, that no one was ashamed of uttering these cries, and the people who were carried away by them did not seem to their neighbours to be in the least absurd.

During the rest which it is customary to take in the middle of the sermon, Fabrizio was informed that there was absolutely no one left in the theatre; one lady only

was still to be seen in her box, the Marchesa Crescenzi. During this brief interval, a great clamour was suddenly heard proceeding from the church; it was the faithful who were voting a statue to the Signor Coadiutore. His success in the second part of the discourse was so wild and worldly, the bursts of Christian contrition gave place so completely to cries of admiration that were altogether profane, that he felt it his duty to address, on leaving the pulpit, a sort of reprimand to his hearers. Whereupon they all left at once with a movement that was singularly formal; and, on reaching the street, all began to applaud with frenzy, and to shout: *"Evviva del Dongo!"*

Fabrizio hastily consulted his watch, and ran to a little barred window which lighted the narrow passage from the organ gallery to the interior of the convent. Out of politeness to the unprecedented and incredible crowd which filled the street, the porter of the *palazzo* Crescenzi had placed a dozen torches in those iron sconces which one sees projecting from the outer walls of *palazzi* built in the middle ages. After some minutes, and long before the shouting had ceased, the event for which Fabrizio was waiting with such anxiety occurred, the Marchesa's carriage, returning from the theatre, appeared in the street; the coachman was obliged to stop, and it was only at a crawling pace, and by dint of shouts, that the carriage was able to reach the door.

The Marchesa had been touched by the sublime music, as is the way with sorrowing hearts, but far more by the complete solitude in which she sat, when she learned the reason for it. In the middle of the second act, and while the tenor was on the stage, even the people in the pit had suddenly abandoned their seats to go and tempt fortune by trying to force their way into the Church of the Visitation. The Marchesa, finding herself stopped by the

crowd outside her door, burst into tears. "I had not made a bad choice," she said to herself.

But precisely on account of this momentary weakening, she firmly resisted the pressure put upon her by the Marchese and the friends of the family, who could not conceive her not going to see so astonishing a preacher.

"Really," they said, "he beats even the best tenor in Italy!" "If I see him, I am lost!" the Marchesa said to herself.

It was in vain that Fabrizio, whose talent seemed more brilliant every day, preached several times more in the same little church, opposite the *palazzo* Crescenzi, never did he catch sight of Clelia, who indeed took offence finally at this affectation of coming to disturb her quiet street, after he had already driven her from her own garden.

In letting his eye run over the faces of the women who listened to him, Fabrizio had noticed some time back a little face of dark complexion, very pretty, and with eyes that darted fire. As a rule these magnificent eyes were drowned in tears at the ninth or tenth sentence in the sermon. When Fabrizio was obliged to say things at some length, which were tedious to himself, he would very readily let his eyes rest on that head, the youthfulness of which pleased him. He learned that this young person was called Annetta Marini, the only daughter and heiress of the richest cloth merchant in Parma, who had died a few months before.

Presently the name of this Annetta Marini, the cloth merchant's daughter, was on every tongue; she had fallen desperately in love with Fabrizio. When the famous sermons began, her marriage had been arranged with Giacomo Rassi, eldest son of the Minister of Justice, who was by no means unattractive to her; but she had barely listened twice to Monsignor Fabrizio before she declared that she

no longer wished to marry; and, since she was asked the reason for so singular a change of mind, she replied that it was not fitting for an honourable girl to marry one man when she had fallen madly in love with another. Her family sought to discover, at first without success, who this other might be.

But the burning tears which Annetta shed at the sermon put them on the way to the truth; her mother and uncles having asked her if she loved Monsignor Fabrizio, she replied boldly that, since the truth had been discovered, she would not demean herself with a lie; she added that, having no hope of marrying the man whom she adored, she wished at least no longer to have her eyes offended by the ridiculous figure of Contino Rassi. This speech in ridicule of the son of a man who was pursued by the envy of the entire middle class became in a couple of days the talk of the whole town. Annetta Marini's reply was thought charming, and everyone repeated it. People spoke of it at the *palazzo* Crescenzi as everywhere else.

Clelia took good care not to open her mouth on such a topic in her own drawing-room: but she plied her maid with questions, and, the following Sunday, after hearing mass in the chapel of her *palazzo,* bade her maid come with her in her carriage and went in search of a second mass at Signorina Marini's parish church. She found assembled there all the gallants of the town, drawn by the same attraction; these gentlemen were standing by the door. Presently, from the great stir which they made, the Marchesa gathered that this Signorina Marini was entering the church; she found herself excellently placed to see her, and, for all her piety, paid little attention to the mass. Clelia found in this middle class beauty a little air of decision which, to her mind, would have suited, if anyone, a woman who had been married for a good many years. Otherwise, she was admirably built on her small

scale, and her eyes, as they say in Lombardy, seemed to make conversation with the things at which she looked. The Marchesa escaped before the end of mass.

The following day the friends of the Crescenzi household, who came regularly to spend the evening there, related a fresh absurdity on the part of Annetta Marini. Since her mother, afraid of her doing something foolish, left only a little money at her disposal, Annetta had gone and offered a magnificent diamond ring, a gift from her father, to the famous Hayez, then at Parma decorating the drawing-rooms of the *palazzo* Crescenzi, and had asked him to paint the portrait of Signor del Dongo; but she wished that in this portrait he should simply be dressed in black, and not in the priestly habit. Well, the previous evening, Annetta's mother had been greatly surprised, and even more shocked to find in her daughter's room a magnificent portrait of Fabrizio del Dongo, set in the finest frame that had been gilded in Parma in the last twenty years.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

CARRIED away by the train of events, we have not had time to sketch the comic race of courtiers who swarm at the court of Parma and who made fatuous comments on the incidents which we have related. What in that country makes a small noble, adorned with an income of three or four thousand lire, worthy to figure in black stockings at the Prince's levees, is, first and foremost, that he shall never have read Voltaire and Rousseau: this condition it is not very difficult to fulfil. He must then know how to speak with emotion of the Sovereign's cold, or of the latest case of mineralogical specimens that has come to him from Saxony. If, after this, you were not absent from mass for a single day in the year, if you could include in the number of your intimate friends two or three prominent monks, the Prince deigned to address a few words to you once every year, a fortnight before or a fortnight after the first of January, which brought you great relief in your parish, and the tax collector dared not press you unduly if you were in arrears with the annual sum of one hundred francs with which your small estate was burdened.

Signor Gonzo was a poor devil of this sort, very noble, who, apart from possessing some little fortune of his own, had obtained, through the Marchese Crescenzi's influence, a magnificent post which brought him in eleven hundred and fifty francs annually. This man might have dined at home; but he had one passion: he was never at his ease and happy except when he found himself in the drawing-

room of some great personage who said to him from time to time: "Hold your tongue, Gonzo, you're a perfect fool." This judgment was prompted by ill temper, for Gonzo had almost always more intelligence than the great personage. He would discuss anything, and quite gracefully: besides, he was ready to change his opinion on a grimace from the master of the house. To tell the truth, although of a profound subtlety in securing his own interests, he had not an idea in his head, and, when the Prince had not a cold, was sometimes embarrassed as he came into a drawing-room.

What had, in Parma, won Gonzo a reputation was a magnificent cocked hat, adorned with a slightly dilapidated black plume, which he wore even with evening dress; but you ought to have seen the way in which he carried this plume, whether upon his head or in his hand; there were talent and importance combined. He inquired with genuine anxiety after the health of the Marchesa's little dog, and, if the *palazzo* Crescenzi had caught fire, he would have risked his life to save one of those fine arm-chairs in gold brocade, which for so many years had caught in his black silk breeches, whenever it so happened that he ventured to sit down for a moment.

Seven or eight persons of this species appeared every evening at seven o'clock in the Marchesa Crescenzi's drawing-room. No sooner had they sat down than a lackey, magnificently attired in a daffodil-yellow livery, covered all over with silver braid, as was the red waistcoat which completed his magnificence, came to take the poor devils' hats and canes. He was immediately followed by a footman carrying an infinitesimal cup of coffee, supported on a stem of silver filigree; and every half hour a butler, wearing a sword and a magnificent coat, in the French style, brought round ices.

Half an hour after the threadbare little courtiers, one

saw arrive five or six officers, talking in loud voices and with a very military air, and usually discussing the number of buttons which ought to be on the soldiers' uniform in order that the Commander in Chief might gain victories. It would not have been prudent to quote a French newspaper in this drawing-room; for, even when the news itself was of the most agreeable kind, as for instance that fifty Liberals had been shot in Spain, the speaker none the less remained convicted of having read a French newspaper. The crowning effort of all these people's skill was to obtain every ten years an increase of 150 francs in their pensions. It is thus that the Prince shares with his nobility the pleasure of reigning over all the peasants and burgesses of the land.

The principal personage, beyond all question, of the Crescenzi drawing-room, was the Cavaliere Foscarini, an entirely honest man; in consequence of which he had been in prison off and on, under every government. He had been a member of that famous Chamber of Deputies which, at Milan, rejected the Registration Law presented to them by Napoleon, an action of very rare occurrence in history. Cavaliere Foscarini, after having been for twenty years a friend of the Marchese's mother, had remained the influential man in the household. He had always some amusing story to tell, but nothing escaped his shrewd perception; and the young Marchesa, who felt herself guilty at heart, trembled before him.

As Gonzo had a regular passion for the great gentleman, who said rude things to him and moved him to tears once or twice every year, his mania was to seek to do him trifling services; and, if he had not been paralysed by the habits of an extreme poverty, he might sometimes have succeeded, for he was not lacking in a certain ingredient of shrewdness, and a far greater effrontery.

Gonzo, as we have seen him, felt some contempt for

the Marchesa Crescenzi, for never in her life had she addressed a word to him that was not quite civil; but after all she was the wife of the famous Marchese Crescenzi, *Cavaliere d'onore* to the Princess, who, once or twice in a month, used to say to Gonzo: "Hold your tongue, Gonzo, you're a perfect fool."

Gonzo observed that everything which was said about little Annetta Marini made the Marchesa emerge for a moment from the state of dreamy indifference in which as a rule she remained plunged until the clock struck eleven; then she made tea, and offered a cup to each of the men present, addressing him by name. After which, at the moment of her withdrawing to her room, she seemed to find a momentary gaiety, and this was the time chosen for repeating to her satirical sonnets.

They compose such sonnets admirably in Italy: it is the one kind of literature that has still a little vitality; as a matter of fact, it is not subjected to the censor, and the courtiers of the *casa* Crescenzi invariably prefaced their sonnets with these words: "Will the Signora Marchesa permit one to repeat to her a very bad sonnet?" And when the sonnet had been greeted with laughter and had been repeated several times, one of the officers would not fail to exclaim: "The Minister of Police ought to see about giving a bit of hanging to the authors of such atrocities." Middle class society, on the other hand, welcomes these sonnets with the most open admiration, and the lawyers' clerks sell copies of them.

From the sort of curiosity shown by the Marchesa, Gonzo imagined that too much had been said in front of her of the beauty of the little Marini, who moreover had a fortune of a million, and that the other woman was jealous of her. As, with his incessant smile and his complete effrontery towards all that was not noble, Gonzo found his way everywhere, on the very next day he arrived in

the Marchesa's drawing-room, carrying his plumed hat in a triumphant fashion which was to be seen perhaps only once or twice in the year, when the Prince had said to him: "*Addio,* Gonzo."

After respectfully greeting the Marchesa, Gonzo did not withdraw as usual to take his seat on the chair which had just been pushed forward for him. He took his stand in the middle of the circle and exclaimed bluntly: "I have seen the portrait of Monsignor del Dongo." Clelia was so surprised that she was obliged to lean upon the arm of her chair; she tried to face the storm, but presently was obliged to leave the room.

"You must agree, my poor Gonzo, that your tactlessness is unique," came arrogantly from one of the officers, who was finishing his fourth ice. "Don't you know that the Coadjutor, who was one of the most gallant Colonels in Napoleon's army, played a trick that ought to have hanged him on the Marchesa's father, when he walked out of the citadel where General Fabio Conti was in command, as he might have walked out of the Steccata?" (The Steccata is the principal church in Parma.)

"Indeed I am ignorant of many things, my dear Captain, and I am a poor imbecile who makes blunders all day long."

This reply, quite to the Italian taste, caused a laugh at the expense of the brilliant officer. The Marchesa soon returned; she had armed herself with courage, and was not without hope of being able herself to admire this portrait, which was said to be excellent. She spoke with praise of the talent of Hayez, who had painted it. Unconsciously she addressed charming smiles at Gonzo, who looked malevolently at the officer. As all the other courtiers of the house indulged in the same pastime, the officer took flight, not without vowing a deadly hatred against Gonzo; the

latter was triumphant, and later in the evening, when he took his leave, was invited to dine next day.

"I can tell you something more," cried Gonzo, the following evening, after dinner, when the servants had left the room: "the latest thing is that our Coadjutor has fallen in love with the little Marini!"

One may judge of the agitation that arose in Clelia's heart on hearing so extraordinary an announcement. The Marchese himself was moved.

"But, Gonzo my friend, you are off the track, as usual! And you ought to speak with a little more caution of a person who has had the honour to sit down eleven times at his Highness's whist-table."

"Well, Signor Marchese," replied Gonzo with the coarseness of people of his sort, "I can promise you that he would just as soon sit down to the little Marini. But it is enough that these details displease you; they no longer exist for me, who desire above all things not to shock my beloved Marchese."

Regularly, after dinner, the Marchese used to retire to take a *siesta*. He let the time pass that day; but Gonzo would sooner have cut out his tongue than have said another word about the little Marini; and, every moment, he began a speech, so planned that the Marchese might hope that he was about to return to the subject of the little lady's love affairs. Gonzo had in a superior degree that Italian quality of mind which consists in exquisitely delaying the launching of the word for which one's hearer longs. The poor Marchese, dying of curiosity, was obliged to make advances; he told Gonzo that, when he had the pleasure of dining with him, he ate twice as much as usual. Gonzo did not take the hint, he began to describe a magnificent collection of pictures which the Marchesa Balbi, the late Prince's mistress, was forming; three or four times he spoke of Hayez, in a slow and measured tone full of the

most profound admiration. The Marchese said to himself: "Now he is coming to the portrait which the little Marini ordered!" But this was what Gonzo took good care not to do. Five o'clock struck, which put the Marchese in the worst of tempers, for he was in the habit of getting into his carriage at half past five, after his *siesta,* to drive to the Corso.

"This is what you do with your stupid talk!" he said rudely to Gonzo: "you are making me reach the Corso after the Princess, whose *Cavaliere d'onore* I am, when she may have orders to give me. Come along! Hurry up! Tell me in a few words, if you can, what is this so-called love affair of the Coadjutor?"

But Gonzo wished to keep this anecdote for the Marchesa, who had invited him to dine; he did *hurry up,* in a very few words, the story demanded of him, and the Marchese, half asleep, ran off to take his *siesta.* Gonzo adopted a wholly different manner with the poor Marchesa. She had remained so young and natural in spite of her high position, that she felt it her duty to make amends for the rudeness with which the Marchese had just spoken to Gonzo. Charmed by this success, her guest recovered all his eloquence, and made it a pleasure, no less than a duty, to enter into endless details with her.

Little Annetta Marini gave as much as a sequin for each place that was kept for her for the sermons; she always arrived with two of her aunts and her father's old cashier. These places, which were reserved for her overnight, were generally chosen almost opposite the pulpit, but slightly in the direction of the high altar, for she had noticed that the Coadjutor often turned towards the altar. Now, what the public also had noticed was that, *not infrequently,* those speaking eyes of the young preacher rested with evident pleasure on the young heiress, that striking beauty; and apparently with some attention,

for, when he had his eyes fixed on her, his sermon became learned; the quotations began to abound in it, there was no more sign of that eloquence which springs from the heart; and the ladies, whose interest ceased almost at once, began to look at the Marini and to find fault with her.

Clelia made him repeat to her three times over all these singular details. At the third repetition she became lost in meditation; she was calculating that just fourteen months had passed since she last saw Fabrizio. "Would it be very wrong," she asked herself, "to spend an hour in a church, not to see Fabrizio but to hear a famous preacher? Besides, I shall take a seat a long way from the pulpit, and I shall look at Fabrizio only once as I go in and once more at the end of the sermon. . . . No," Clelia said to herself, "it is not Fabrizio I am going to see, I am going to hear the astounding preacher!" In the midst of all these reasonings, the Marchesa felt some remorse; her conduct had been so exemplary for fourteen months! "Well," she said to herself, in order to secure some peace of mind, "if the first woman to arrive this evening has been to hear Monsignor del Dongo, I shall go too; if she has not been, I shall stay away."

Having come to this decision, the Marchesa made Gonzo happy by saying to him:

"Try to find out on what day the Coadjutor will be preaching, and in what church. This evening, before you go, I shall perhaps have a commission to give you."

No sooner had Gonzo set off for the Corso than Clelia went to take the air in the garden of her *palazzo*. She did not consider the objection that for ten months she had not set foot in it. She was lively, animated; she had a colour. That evening, as each boring visitor entered the room, her heart throbbed with emotion. At length they announced Gonzo, who at the first glance saw that he was going to be the indispensable person for the next week;

"The Marchesa is jealous of the little Marini, and, upon my word, it would be a fine drama to put on the stage," he said to himself, "with the Marchesa playing the leading lady, little Annetta the juvenile, and Monsignor del Dongo the lover! Upon my word, the seats would not be too dear at two francs." He was beside himself with joy, and throughout the evening cut everybody short, and told the most ridiculous stories (that, for example, of the famous actress and the Marquis de Pequigny, which he had heard the day before from a French visitor). The Marchesa, for her part, could not stay in one place; she moved about the drawing-room, she passed into a gallery adjoining it into which the Marchese had admitted no picture that had not cost more than twenty thousand francs. These pictures spoke in so clear a language that evening that they wore out the Marchesa's heart with the force of her emotion. At last she heard the double doors open, she ran to the drawing-room: it was the Marchesa Raversi! But, on making her the customary polite speeches, Clelia felt that her voice was failing her. The Marchesa made her repeat twice the question: "What do you think of the fashionable preacher?" which she had not heard at first.

"I did regard him as a little intriguer, a most worthy nephew of the illustrious Contessa Mosca, but the last time he preached; why, it was at the Church of the Visitation, opposite you, he was so sublime, that I could not hate him any longer, and I regard him as the most eloquent man I have ever heard."

"So you have been to hear his sermons?" said Clelia, trembling with happiness.

"Why," the Marchesa laughed, "haven't you been listening? I wouldn't miss one for anything in the world. They say that his lungs are affected, and that soon he will have to give up preaching."

No sooner had the Marchesa left than Clelia called Gonzo to the gallery.

"I have almost decided," she told him, "to hear this preacher who is so highly praised. When does he preach?"

"Next Monday, that is to say in three days from now; and one would say that he had guessed Your Excellency's intention, for he is coming to preach in the Church of the Visitation."

There was more to be settled; but Clelia could no longer muster enough voice to speak: she took five or six turns of the gallery without adding a word. Gonzo said to himself: "There is vengeance at work. How can anyone have the insolence to escape from a prison, especially when he is guarded by a hero like General Fabio Conti?

"However, you must make haste," he added with delicate irony; "his lungs are affected. I heard Doctor Rambo say that he has not a year to live; God is punishing him for having broken his bond by treacherously escaping from the citadel."

The Marchesa sat down on the divan in the gallery, and made a sign to Gonzo to follow her example. After some moments of silence she handed him a little purse in which she had a few sequins ready. "Reserve four places for me."

"Will it be permitted for poor Gonzo to slip in in Your Excellency's train?"

"Certainly. Reserve five places. . . . I do not in the least mind," she added, "whether I am near the pulpit; but I should like to see Signorina Marini, who they say is so pretty."

The Marchesa could not live through the three days that separated her from the famous Monday, the day of the sermon. Gonzo, inasmuch as it was a signal honour to be seen in the company of so great a lady, had put on his French coat with his sword; this was not all, taking

advantage of the proximity of the *palazzo,* he had had carried into the church a magnificent gilt armchair for the Marchesa, which was thought the last word in insolence by the middle classes. One may imagine how the poor Marchesa felt when she saw this armchair, which had been placed directly opposite the pulpit. Clelia was in such confusion, with downcast eyes, shrinking into a corner of the huge chair, that she had not even the courage to look at the little Marini, whom Gonzo pointed out to her with his hand with an effrontery which amazed her. Everyone not of noble birth was absolutely nothing in the eyes of this courtier.

Fabrizio appeared in the pulpit; he was so thin, so pale, so *consumed,* that Clelia's eyes immediately filled with tears. Fabrizio uttered a few words, then stopped, as though his voice had suddenly failed; he tried in vain to begin various sentences; he turned round and took up a sheet of paper:

"Brethren," he said, "an unhappy soul and one well worthy of all your pity requests you, through my lips, to pray for the ending of his torments, which will cease only with his life."

Fabrizio read the rest of his paper very slowly; but the expression of his voice was such that before he was halfway through the prayer, everyone was weeping, even Gonzo. "At any rate, I shall not be noticed," thought the Marchesa, bursting into tears.

While he was reading from the paper, Fabrizio found two or three ideas concerning the state of the unhappy man for whom he had come to beg the prayers of the faithful. Presently thoughts came to him in abundance. While he appeared to be addressing the public, he spoke only to the Marchesa. He ended his discourse a little sooner than was usual, because, in spite of his efforts to control them, his tears got the better of him to such a point that

he was no longer able to pronounce his words in an intelligible manner. The good judges found this sermon strange but quite equal, in pathos at least, to the famous sermon preached with the lighted candles. As for Clelia, no sooner had she heard the first ten lines of the prayer read by Fabrizio than it seemed to her an atrocious crime to have been able to spend fourteen months without seeing him. On her return home she took to her bed, to be able to think of Fabrizio with perfect freedom; and next morning, at an early hour, Fabrizio received a note couched in the following terms:

"We rely upon your honour; find four *bravi,* of whose discretion you can be sure, and to-morrow, when midnight sounds from the Steccata, be by a little door which bears the number 19, in the Strada San Paolo. Remember that you may be attacked, do not come alone."

On recognising that heavenly script, Fabrizio fell on his knees and burst into tears. "At last," he cried, "after fourteen months and eight days! Farewell to preaching."

It would take too long to describe all the varieties of folly to which the hearts of Fabrizio and Clelia were a prey that day. The little door indicated in the note was none other than that of the orangery of the *palazzo* Crescenzi, and ten times in the day Fabrizio found an excuse to visit it. He armed himself, and alone, shortly before midnight, with a rapid step, was passing by the door when, to his inexpressible joy, he heard a well-known voice say in a very low whisper:

"Come in here, friend of my heart."

Fabrizio entered cautiously and found himself actually in the orangery, but opposite a window heavily barred which stood three or four feet above the ground. The darkness was intense. Fabrizio had heard a slight sound

in this window, and was exploring the bars with his hand, when he felt another hand, slipped through the bars, take hold of his and carry it to a pair of lips which gave it a kiss.

"It is I," said a dear voice, "who have come here to tell you that I love you, and to ask you if you are willing to obey me."

One may imagine the answer, the joy, the astonishment of Fabrizio; after the first transports, Clelia said to him:

"I have made a vow to the Madonna, as you know, never to see you; that is why I receive you in this profound darkness. I wish you to understand clearly that, should you ever force me to look at you in the daylight, all would be over between us. But first of all, I do not wish you to preach before Annetta Marini, and do not go and think that it was I who was so foolish as to have an armchair carried into the House of God."

"My dear angel, I shall never preach again before anyone; I have been preaching only in the hope that one day I might see you."

"Do not speak like that, remember that it is not permitted to me to see you."

Here we shall ask leave to pass over, without saying a single word about them, an interval of three years.

At the time when our story is resumed, Conte Mosca had long since returned to Parma, as Prime Minister, and was more powerful than ever.

After three years of divine happiness, Fabrizio's heart underwent a caprice of affection which led to a complete change in his circumstances. The Marchesa had a charming little boy two years old, Sandrino, who was his mother's joy; he was always with her or on the knees of the Marchese Crescenzi; Fabrizio, on the other hand, hardly ever saw him; he did not wish him to become accustomed to

loving another father. He formed the plan of taking the child away before his memories should have grown distinct.

In the long hours of each day when the Marchesa could not see her lover, Sandrino's company consoled her; for we have to confess a thing which will seem strange north of the Alps; in spite of her errors she had remained true to her vow; she had promised the Madonna, as the reader may perhaps remember, never to *see* Fabrizio; these had been her exact words; consequently she received him only at night, and there was never any light in the room.

But every evening he was received by his mistress; and, what is worthy of admiration, in the midst of a court devoured by curiosity and envy, Fabrizio's precautions had been so ably calculated that this *amicizia*, as it is called in Lombardy, had never even been suspected. Their love was too intense for quarrels not to occur; Clelia was extremely given to jealousy, but almost always their quarrels sprang from another cause. Fabrizio had made use of some public ceremony in order to be in the same place as the Marchesa and to look at her; she then seized a pretext to escape quickly, and for a long time afterwards banished her lover.

Amazement was felt at the court of Parma that no intrigue should be known of a woman so remarkable both for her beauty and for the loftiness of her mind; she gave rise to passions which inspired many foolish actions, and often Fabrizio too was jealous.

The good Archbishop Landriani had long been dead; the piety, the exemplary morals, the eloquence of Fabrizio had made him be forgotten; his own elder brother was dead and all the wealth of his family had come to him. From this time onwards he distributed annually among the vicars and curates of his diocese the hundred odd thousand francs which the Archbishopric of Parma brought him in.

It would be difficult to imagine a life more honoured, more honourable or more useful than Fabrizio had made

for himself, when everything was upset by this unfortunate caprice of paternal affection.

"According to the vow which I respect and which nevertheless is the bane of my life, since you refuse to see me during the day," he said once to Clelia, "I am obliged to live perpetually alone, with no other distraction than my work; and besides I have not enough work. In the course of this stern and sad way of passing the long hours of each day, an idea has occurred to me, which is now torturing me, and against which I have been striving in vain for six months: my son will not love me at all; he never hears my name mentioned. Brought up amid all the pleasing luxury of the *palazzo* Crescenzi, he barely knows me. On the rare occasions when I do see him, I think of his mother, whose heavenly beauty he recalls to me, and whom I may not see, and he must find me a serious person, which, with children, means sad."

"Well," said the Marchesa, "to what is all this speech leading? It frightens me."

"To my having my son; I wish him to live with me; I wish to see him every day; I wish him to grow accustomed to loving me; I wish to love him myself at my leisure. Since a fatality without counterpart in the world decrees that I must be deprived of that happiness which so many other tender hearts enjoy, and forbids me to pass my life with all that I adore, I wish at least to have beside me a creature who recalls you to my heart, who to some extent takes your place. Men and affairs are a burden to me in my enforced solitude; you know that ambition has always been a vain word to me, since the moment when I had the good fortune to be locked up by Barbone; and anything that is not felt in my heart seems to me fatuous in the melancholy which in your absence overwhelms me."

One can imagine the keen anguish with which her lover's grief filled the heart of poor Clelia; her sorrow was all

the more intense, as she felt that Fabrizio had some justification. She went the length of wondering whether she ought not to try to obtain a release from her vow. Then she would receive Fabrizio during the day like any other person in society, and her reputation for sagacity was too well established for any scandal to arise. She told herself that by spending enough money she could procure a dispensation from her vow; but she felt also that this purely worldly arrangement would not set her conscience at rest, and that an angry heaven might perhaps punish her for this fresh crime.

On the other hand, if she consented to yield to so natural a desire on the part of Fabrizio, if she sought not to hurt that tender heart which she knew so well, and whose tranquillity her singular vow so strangely jeopardised, what chance was there of abducting the only son of one of the greatest nobles in Italy without the fraud's being discovered? The Marchese Crescenzi would spend enormous sums, would himself conduct the investigations, and sooner or later the facts of the abduction would become known. There was only one way of meeting this danger, the child must be sent abroad, to Edinburgh, for instance, or to Paris; but this was a course to which the mother's affection could never consent. The other plan proposed by Fabrizio, which was indeed the more reasonable of the two, had something sinister about it, and was almost more alarming still in the eyes of this despairing mother; she must, said Fabrizio, feign an illness for the child; he would grow steadily worse, until finally he died in the Marchese Crescenzi's absence.

A repugnance which, in Clelia, amounted to terror, caused a rupture that could not last.

Clelia insisted that they must not tempt God; that this beloved son was the fruit of a crime, and that if they provoked the divine anger further, God would not fail to

call him back to Himself. Fabrizio spoke again of his strange destiny: "The station to which chance has called me," he said to Clelia, "and my love oblige me to dwell in an eternal solitude, I cannot, like the majority of my brethren, taste the pleasures of an intimate society, since you will receive me only in the darkness, which reduces to a few moments, so to speak, the part of my life which I may spend with you."

Tears flowed in abundance. Clelia fell ill; but she loved Fabrizio too well to maintain her opposition to the terrible sacrifice that he demanded of her. Apparently, Sandrino fell ill; the Marchese sent in haste for the most celebrated doctors, and Clelia at once encountered a terrible difficulty which she had not foreseen: she must prevent this adored child from taking any of the remedies ordered by the doctors; it was no small matter.

The child, kept in bed longer than was good for his health, became really ill. How was one to explain to the doctors the cause of his malady? Torn asunder by two conflicting interests both so dear to her, Clelia was within an ace of losing her reason. Must she consent to an apparent recovery, and so sacrifice all the results of that long and painful make-believe? Fabrizio, for his part, could neither forgive himself the violence he was doing to the heart of his mistress nor abandon his project. He had found a way of being admitted every night to the sick child's room, which had led to another complication. The Marchesa came to attend to her son, and sometimes Fabrizio was obliged to see her by candle-light, which seemed to the poor sick heart of Clelia a horrible sin and one that foreboded the death of Sandrino. In vain had the most famous casuists, consulted as to the necessity of adherence to a vow in a case where its performance would obviously do harm, replied that the vow could not be regarded as broken in a criminal fashion, so long as the person bound by a

promise to God failed to keep that promise not for a vain pleasure of the senses but so as not to cause an obvious evil. The Marchesa was none the less in despair, and Fabrizio could see the time coming when his strange idea was going to bring about the death of Clelia and that of his son.

He had recourse to his intimate friend, Conte Mosca, who, for all the old Minister that he was, was moved by this tale of love of which to a great extent he had been ignorant.

"I can procure for you the Marchese's absence for five or six days at least: when do you require it?"

A little later, Fabrizio came to inform the Conte that everything was in readiness now for them to take advantage of the Marchese's absence.

Two days after this, as the Marchese was riding home from one of his estates in the neighbourhood of Mantua, a party of brigands, evidently hired to execute some personal vengeance, carried him off, without maltreating him in any way, and placed him in a boat which took three days to travel down the Po, making the same journey that Fabrizio had made long ago, after the famous affair with Giletti. On the fourth day, the brigands marooned the Marchese on a desert island in the Po, taking care first to rob him completely, and to leave him no money or other object that had the slightest value. It was two whole days before the Marchese managed to reach his *palazzo* in Parma; he found it draped in black and all his household in mourning.

This abduction, very skilfully carried out, had a deplorable consequence: Sandrino, secretly installed in a large and fine house where the Marchesa came to see him almost every day, died after a few months. Clelia imagined herself to have been visited with a just punishment, for having been unfaithful to her vow to the Madonna: she had seen

Fabrizio so often by candle-light, and indeed twice in broad daylight and with such rapturous affection, during Sandrino's illness. She survived by a few months only this beloved son, but had the joy of dying in the arms of her lover.

Fabrizio was too much in love and too religious to have recourse to suicide: he hoped to meet Clelia again in a better world, but he had too much intelligence not to feel that he had first to atone for many faults.

A few days after Clelia's death, he signed several settlements by which he assured a pension of one thousand francs to each of his servants, and reserved a similar pension for himself; he gave landed property, of an annual value of 100,000 lire or thereabouts, to Contessa Mosca; a similar estate to the Marchesa del Dongo, his mother, and such residue as there might be of the paternal fortune to one of his sisters who was poorly married. On the following day, having forwarded to the proper authorities his resignation of his Archbishopric and of all the posts which the favour of Ernesto V and the Prime Minister's friendship had successively heaped upon him, he retired to the *Charterhouse of Parma*, situated in the woods adjoining the Po, two leagues from Sacca.

Contessa Mosca had strongly approved, at the time, her husband's return to office, but she herself would never on any account consent to cross the frontier of the States of Ernesto V. She held her court at Vignano, a quarter of a league from Casalmaggiore, on the left bank of the Po, and consequently in the Austrian States. In this magnificent palace of Vignano, which the Conte had built for her, she entertained every Thursday all the high society of Parma, and every day her own many friends. Fabrizio had never missed a day in going to Vignano. The Contessa, in a word, combined all the outward appearances of happiness, but she lived for a very short time only after Fa-

brizio, whom she adored, and who spent but one year in his Charterhouse.

The prisons of Parma were empty, the Conte immensely rich, Ernesto V adored by his subjects, who compared his rule to that of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

## TO THE HAPPY FEW

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

This translation of *La Chartreuse de Parme* has been made from the reprint in two volumes of the first edition (Paris, Les éditions G. Crès et Cie. MCMXXII), with reference also to the stereotyped edition published by MM. Calmann Lévy and to the reprint issued by M. Flammarion in his series, *Les meilleurs auteurs classiques* (1921). I am also indebted to the extremely literal version by Signora Maria Ortiz (Biblioteca Sansoniana Straniera —*La Certosa di Parma*—G. C. Sansoni, Firenze, 1922), which has thrown a ray of light on several dark passages.

The *Chartreuse* was written in (and not a distance of three hundred leagues from) Paris, and in the short interval between November 4, 1838, and December 26 of that year. So much the author reveals in a note, which I do not translate: "The Char, made 4 novembre 1838—26 décembre id. The 3 septembre 1838, I had the idea of the Char. I begined it after a tour in Britanny, I suppose, or to the Havre. I begined the 4 nov. till the 26 décembre. The 26 dec. I send the 6 énormes cahiers to Kol. for les faire voir to the bookseller." His object in pretending to have written the book in 1830 may have been to establish a prescriptive immunity from any charge of traducing the government of Louis-Philippe; if so, it is by a characteristic slip that he speaks of having written it *towards the end of* 1830.

Kol., otherwise Romain Colomb, Beyle's executor, relates in the *Notice Biographique* prefixed to *Armance* that in January, 1839, while the *Chartreuse* was going through

the press, a *cahier* of sixty pages of the manuscript was mislaid. Unable to find it among the mass of papers that littered his room, Beyle rewrote the sixty pages, and the new version was already in type when he told Colomb of his loss. Colomb at once searched for and found the missing *cahier,* whereupon Beyle, "stupefied by the ease of my discovery, dreading, in a sense, the sight of this manuscript, would not even glance over it, much less compare it with the pages that had taken its place."

It was published in March, 1839. In the same year, Beyle began to correct, reduce and amplify the whole work, before he was moved by Balzac's criticism to condense the first fifty-four pages into four or five. Three copies thus annotated are in existence, one of which has been reproduced in facsimile in an extremely limited edition: (Paris, Edouard Champion, 3 vols. 1921—100 copies only.) In 1904 M. Casimir Stryienski reprinted in the first volume of *Les Soirées du Stendhal Club* (Mercure de France) the two fragments of which a translation follows. The first is intended for inclusion in Chapter V, in the brief account of Fabrizio's convalescence at Amiens. Colonel Le Baron, the wounded officer whom he met and left at the White Horse Inn at the end of Chapter IV, is now re-introduced as returning to his family at Amiens, and a story is told them which supersedes the account of General Pietranera's death in Chapter II. The second fragment is a small expansion of the already over-long Chapter VI.

Visitors to Parma will look in vain for most of the architectural monuments which met the gaze of Fabrizio. The Torre Farnese has never existed, though it may have been suggested, as to mass, by the huge fragment of the Palazzo Farnese at Piacenza, as well as by the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, and as to origin, by the story of Parisina and Ugo d'Este, told in English by

Gibbon and Byron. In appearance, it would have been not unlike the tower, also damaged by an earthquake, which stands in the background of Mantegna's fresco of the *Martyrdom of Saint James,* in the Church of the Eremitani at Padua. The problem of how a road running out of Parma to the south could lead directly to Sacca and the Po is as insoluble as that of the guarded permission given to Fabrizio in 1815 to read the novels of Walter Scott.

The Steccata of course exists, and the Church of San Giovanni, but the latter is singularly bare of monumental tombs. There is even a Charterhouse, at San Lazzaro Parmense, though it has escaped the attention of Baedeker. There were Farnese, but the last of them died, of the pleasures of the table, in 1731; a portrait of him in his corpulence may be seen by the curious in the Reale Galleria in the Pilotta—another large Farnese Palace also unfinished. There is indeed a Cathedral, but there is no Archbishop, and the Bishop's Palace is an untidy piece of patched-up antiquity.

It is probable that Beyle was led to place the scene of his story at Parma, which, in *Rome, Naples et Florence,* he had dismissed, not unjustly, as *ville d'ailleurs assez plate,* precisely because there was not, in 1838, any reigning *dynasty* in that State. The Duchy of Parma was held and admirably governed by Marie-Louise, the wife and widow of Napoleon, from 1815 until after Beyle's death in 1843, when she was still in the prime of life, being by some years his junior. Suddenly, in 1847, she died. The Bourbon dynasty, which had been transplanted to the brief Kingdom of Etruria, and in 1814 had been placated with the Republic of Lucca as a temporary Duchy (which Charles II had finally sold, a few months earlier, to its legal heir, the Grand Duke of Tuscany), returned, and rapidly converted Stendhal's fiction into historical fact.

Charles II was almost at once obliged to abdicate. His son, Charles III, proceeded to emulate the career of Ranuccio-Ernesto IV until, in 1854, he met a similar fate. His widow, a daughter of the Duc de Berri, then acted as Regent for her son Robert I, until in 1859 the Risorgimento swept them for ever from their Duchy. Duke Robert died in 1907, the father of twenty children, one of whom, Prince Sixte de Bourbon-Parme, shewed in the late war some reflexion of the spirit of Fabrizio del Dongo, as the curious English reader may find in my translation of his *L'Autriche et la paix séparée* (*Austria's Peace Offer,* London, Constable and Co., Ltd., 1921). Another is the Empress Zita, while a third has re-established the Bourbon dynasty in Northern Europe by becoming the father of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

Francesco Hayez, the Milanese painter immortalised by his decoration of the *palazzo* Crescenzi and by his portrait of Fabrizio del Dongo, died at a great age in 1882, having outlived the date appointed by Beyle for his own immortality.

C. K. S. M.

## FRAGMENT I

### *BIRAGUE'S NARRATIVE*

FABRIZIO, well received in this house which seemed to him very pleasant, sought never to speak of the battle, since memories of that sort depressed the Colonel; but as he thought without ceasing of the details of which he had been a witness, he would sometimes return to the topic; then the Colonel placed a finger on his lips with a smile, and spoke of something else. On the other hand, Fabrizio was careful never to say anything that might let it be guessed by what succession of chances he had been brought into the neighbourhood of Waterloo. The ladies especially were constantly placing him under the necessity of finding polite answers which should tell them nothing of what they desired to know. At every moment, by phrases which betrayed the keenest interest, they placed him under the necessity of telling them something; but he got well out of the trap and the ladies knew absolutely nothing, except that he was called Vasi, and even then they had good reason to believe that this name was assumed.

Colonel Le Baron, his wife and the ladies of their acquaintance were therefore devoured by curiosity, this young man's adventures must indeed be extraordinary.

"All that I can say positively," repeated the Colonel, "is that he is endowed with the truest courage, the most simple, the most innocent, so to speak. When I was so stupid as to set him on picket at the head of the bridge of

La Sainte, and he fought there, one against ten, I would wager that he was drawing a sabre for the first time."

"And his passport which you went to verify at the municipality is really made out: Vasi, dealer in barometers, travelling with his wares?" . . .

The ladies, that day, plied him with a thousand artful questions about the barometers, he extricated himself with a laugh and very neatly; they consulted him as to the state of the barometer in the house, which they put in his hands, he remembered the tone that, in similar circumstances, Conte Pietranera would have adopted, and, justified by the fun that was being made of him, replied in a tone of the most lively gallantry. His appearance was so modest and his tone was in so strange a contrast to his ordinary manner that it was by no means ill received, the ladies went into fits of laughter. That same evening the Colonel said to them:

"Chance has just offered me a way of finding out our young man's position; you know that resurrected-looking creature who has come to him from Italy, the man is a lawyer and is called Birague, but besides that he is dying of fright; he speaks bad French, but I hope that his gibberish may not offend you, for he is so driven by fear that each of his sentences says something. This morning, this lawyer who, for some days, has always followed me with his eye at the *café,* has at last found an excuse for, as he says, presenting his respects to me; I at once thought that perhaps you would deign not to be put off by his speech, which for that matter greatly resembles your young favourite's; and so I have invited this strange creature to take tea with us this evening, and, if you give me leave, I shall now send Beloir to fetch him from the *café.*"

Ten minutes later, Trooper Beloir announced at the door of the drawing-room: "M. Birague, *avocat.*"

The conversation lasted for fully two hours, the ladies heaped every attention on the poor lawyer, who did everything in his power to please them, but it was in vain that they sought to extract from him anything that bore upon Fabrizio; they had lost patience with his discretion, which was not lacking in polite forms of speech, when the Colonel exclaimed:

"I must say, my dear *avocat,* that you are a very brave man, how could you dare enter France in the present state of things? They are kind enough to give me in the army a certain reputation for bravery, but I must confess to you that in your place, and (I tell you frankly) speaking a French so different from that spoken by the natives of the country, I should never have ventured to penetrate into so disturbed a country. Now I see that you have made a conquest of these ladies, you have an air of sincerity which pleases me and I should like to give you my protection. Madame's uncle is Mayor of Amiens; I ought to tell you that, since you are not recommended by an Ambassador, your fate lies in his hands. M. le Maire Leborgne has a savage nature, he will never believe that you have come to Amiens for your health," and so forth.

The ladies were quick in taking the hint given them by the Colonel; they took the utmost pains to give the Milanese lawyer a strong impression of the cruel nature of the worthy M. Leborgne, Mayor of Amiens. Birague turned paler than his shirt, than the white cravat and enormous hat in which he had attired himself that evening to be presented to ladies; but he found himself so well treated that finally about eleven o'clock he ventured to ask the Colonel if he had any horses. The Colonel asked him whether, at that time of night, he wished to go for a ride, saying that he had only two horses, which indeed were

a pair of screws, but that he placed them willingly at his service.

"I should not think of going out by the gate at this hour, and running the risk of seeing myself questioned by the police, but I find so estimable a humanity in your heart and in the hearts of these good ladies that I venture to make a request of you; allow me to spend the night in your horses' hayloft: as it is an idea that has just occurred to me, the terrible Mayor Leborgne would never hear of it and I should spend one night at least in peace and quiet. I am lodging with His Excellency, M. Vasi, but he has committed the imprudence, as a matter of fact long before my arrival, of refusing to see any more of the Duprez family, who are greatly annoyed and who, I have no doubt, would be glad to have their revenge. I have not attempted to hide my feelings in the matter from M. Vasi, I have taken the liberty of saying that this step was rash on his part; but your experience, Monsieur le Colonel, must have taught you what the rashness of youth is. M. Vasi's answer was that he would have been stifled by boredom if he had continued to spend his evenings with the Duprez family.

"In the present state of things, the Duprez, who, no doubt, desire to be avenged, will not dare to attack a man like M. Vasi, but they will take it out of a poor devil like myself," and so on.

The Colonel ended by giving M. Birague a letter of recommendation addressed to the Mayor of Amiens, in which he declared that he would answer with his life for M. Birague, a respectable lawyer of Milan, whom he had known when he was stationed in that city.

"Carry this letter on you while you are on your way to the Grand Monarque, and burn all the written or printed documents which you may have in your room; spend a quiet night, but you see that I am answering

for you, come to-morrow and tell me your whole history so that, if the Mayor questions me closely, I can make a show of having known you for a long time; say nothing to M. Vasi of what I am doing for you."

One may imagine whether this evening was amusing for the ladies, but they were afraid of having alarmed M. Birague unduly.

"Really, the man's appearance was incredible," said Mme. Le Baron.

"But," put in one of her friends, "it becomes more and more likely that our young *protégé* Vasi is a man of consequence in his own country."

The Colonel had to employ stratagems for a week; M. Birague spoke as freely as could be desired of his own affairs, but was impenetrable on everything that related to Fabrizio. Mme. Le Baron and her friends invited him to luncheon one day when the Colonel was absent and played so cruelly upon M. Birague's alarm that he ended by saying to them with tears:

"Oh, well, I see that you are good ladies, I see that you would not wish to ruin me, you have immense influence with the Mayor of Amiens, give me your word that you will obtain for me a passport for England signed by the Mayor and I shall at least be able to fly to London in case of danger; my father ordered me to travel by London so as to be able to return to Milan without fear of Barone Binder, the Chief of Police there; he is a man of the same sort as your Mayor, it is not easy to get out of his prisons, once one has got into them."

"Very well," exclaimed Mme. Le Baron, "if you are frank with us, I give you my word that to-morrow you shall have your passport for London; we wish no harm to M. Vasi, far from it, this lady," she pointed to the youngest of her friends, "has a tender regard for him."

Birague was slightly astonished by the shout of laughter

which greeted this admission; he had some difficulty in replying with any clarity to the hundred questions by which he was at once overwhelmed.

The ladies knew already that Vasi was an assumed name, that Fabrizio del Dongo was the second son of the Marchese del Dongo, Second Grand Majordomo Major of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, one of the greatest noblemen in that country, to whom his, Birague's father, was steward. On the news of Napoleon's landing from the Gulf of Granti, in June, regardless of the alarm of his aunt and mother, Fabrizio had fled from his father's magnificent castle, situated at Grianta, on the Lake of Como, six leagues from the Swiss frontier.

Birague was at this stage in his narrative when the Colonel returned; he was told all that Birague had already said; as his regiment had been stationed for some time at Lodi, a few leagues from Milan, he knew all the principal personages of the court of Prince Eugène.

"What," he cried, "that Contessa Gina Pietranera, of whom you are speaking to these ladies as the aunt of Fabrizio, is she that famous Contessa Pietranera, the most beautiful woman in Milan in the days of the Viceroy, whose word was law at his court?"

"The very same, Colonel."

"And what age might she be now?"

"Twenty-seven or twenty-eight; she is more beautiful than ever, but she is completely ruined, her husband was murdered in what they called a duel, and the Contessa was furious at not being able to avenge his death: the General was out shooting in the mountains of Bergamo with some officers of the Ultra Party; he, as you know, although belonging to a family of the old nobility, had always served with the troops of the Cisalpine Republic; there was a luncheon in the course of this shooting party, one of the Ultra officers took the liberty of belittling

the courage of the Cisalpine troops; the General struck him a blow, the luncheon was interrupted; as they had no weapons but guns, they fought with those, the poor General fell stone dead, with two bullets in his body; but the details of this duel made such a stir in Milan that all the officers who had been present were obliged to go and travel in Switzerland. The local surgeon who examined the General's body certified that the bullet which caused his death had entered from the back. This statement by the surgeon came to the Signor Barone Binder, Director General of the Police, Contessa Pietranera knew of it at once, for she can do anything she likes at Milan; all the important people of the place are her friends and are at her service. Twenty-four hours later, there arrived a second statement by the country surgeon from the Bergamo district; it contradicted the first and stated that the bullet which caused the death had entered by the stomach and that the second bullet which had passed through the thigh had also entered from in front; but they said that this surgeon had received a large sum of money. On the very night after the arrival of this second statement, the officers who had been present at the duel left for Switzerland; the funeral was held next day; they were afraid of being mobbed by the crowd, and the strangest thing of all was that the surgeon also left for Switzerland, where he still is. He has never dared to shew his face again his own neighbourhood; the Bergamasks have sworn to exterminate him; and they don't take things lightly in that part of the world. It was after that that there was the famous quarrel between Signora Pietranera and her friend Limercati."

"What, is that the famous Limercati who, in 1811, had such fine English horses, seven of them?"

"No doubt, Lodovico Limercati; he had forty horses in his stables, he has an income of over two hundred

thousand lire; my cousin Ercole is his factor; but there's a bad relation for you, he has never thought of employing me as lawyer to the rich Limercati estate."

"It is terrible, frightful," cried Mme. Le Baron, "but you spoke of a letter which, I must tell you, excites my curiosity greatly."

## FRAGMENT II

## *CONTE ZORAFI, THE PRINCE'S "PRESS"*

CONTE ZURLA, the Minister of the Interior, brought to Signora Sanseverina's Conte Zorafi, who was the Press of Parma.

At the gatherings at which he appeared, that silence, which is often painful at official gatherings, could not find a place, and, in a country which has a terrible police and a State Prison the tower of which, one hundred and eighty feet high, may be seen at the end of every street, all gatherings of more than two persons may be considered official.

One thing that may be said in praise of Zorafi is that he was no more of a spy than any other gentleman at court; in fact, at heart he was ridiculous, but not at all wicked. No other gentleman at court could, without risk to his friends, have seen the Sovereign daily. Zorafi fancied himself a Minister, and was afraid of Conte Mosca. At the same time he was obliged, ten times in a month perhaps, to speak evil of him. When the Conte had scored a marked success in any affair, he was certain to be blamed, the day after, by the Prince's Press.

Conte Zorafi was a man of spirit who could not bear to have fifty napoleons in his desk. As soon as he saw that sum, or indeed a much less considerable sum in his possession, he would think of spending it. For instance, on the day on which we shall do him the honour of pre-

senting him to the reader, he will have just bought for forty-five napoleons a magnificent English lustre. The purchase made, not knowing where to place it and already caring less about it, he has asked Prinote, the famous jeweller, to keep it in his shop.

This Conte had spent his youth in composing sonnets in an emphatic style over which the people of Lombardy had gone so mad as to compare them to the sonnets of Monti. Now, in some connexion or other, someone had ventured to say in public that this style, which was so emphatic, was emphatic with the simple character of Napoleon; it had required only this comment to make Zorafi's sonnets fall into disrepute.

And, a surprising thing, Zorafi, whose character was precisely that of a conceited child, had not shewn the slightest annoyance. Besides what was more serious than the decline of his sonnets, he had an income of barely nine or ten thousand lire and spent twenty-five.

In spite of these 25,000 lire he frequently had debts, and these debts were paid every year by an unseen hand.

What then was Zorafi? He was the Prince's *Press*.

He was a Conte, as everyone is in Italy, but besides that he had enjoyed the greatest literary renown for ten years. Zorafi was not at all wicked, or at least had only the ill temper of a child. He had the purest Sienese accent. The sentences flowed from his lips with a perfect facility, he spoke of everything with charm, in a word nothing would have been lacking if from time to time he could have found some idea to place in his sentences.

A little time since, the Prince had given Zorafi a carriage, but this was on condition of his paying at least twenty-five visits daily.

"It does not suit me at present to have a newspaper printed," the Prince had said to him in making him

a present of the carriage, with horses attached, and a coachman and groom to boot. "A newspaper conducted by a man of your sort would have a crowd of subscribers; very well, have a crowd of friends and tell them, with the spirit for which you are distinguished, the articles that you would print, if you had the privilege of the newspaper. One day, you shall have this newspaper, and it will bring you in an income of 50,000 lire. For I shall give you plenty of liberty, you will speak of the measures adopted by my Government."

Once they had observed this mania in Zorafi, people listened to him in society, as in another place they read the *Journal Officiel.*

END OF VOLUME II